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BY WHOSE HAND?

Or, The Room of the Secret Door

By T. C. HARBAUGH, Author of "Robespierre," "The Black Inn," etc.

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CHAPTER I.
THE NINTH OF JUNE.

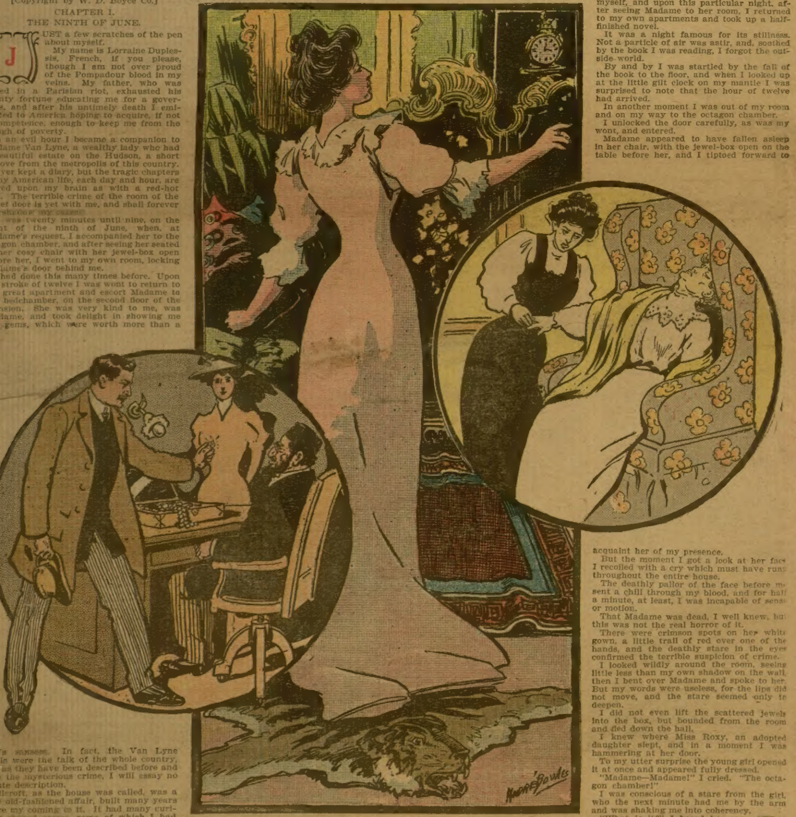
JUST a few scratches of the pen about myself.

My name is Lorraine Duplessis, French, if you please, though I am not over proud of the Pompadour blood in my veins. My father, who was killed in a Parisian riot, exhausted his scanty fortune educating me for a governess, and after his untimely death I emigrated to America hoping to acquire, if not a competence, enough to keep me from the slough of poverty.

In an evil hour I became a companion to Madame Van Lyne, a wealthy lady who had a beautiful estate on the Hudson, a short remove from the metropolis of this country. I never kept a diary, but the tragic chapters of my American life, each day and hour, are seared upon my brain as with a red-hot iron. The terrible crime of the room of the secret door is yet with me, and shall forever overshadow my career.

It was twenty minutes until nine, on the night of the ninth of June, when, at Madame's request, I accompanied her to the octagon chamber, and after seeing her seated in her cosy chair with her jewel-box open before her, I went to my own room, locking Madame's door behind me.

I had done this many times before. Upon the stroke of twelve I was wont to return to the great apartment and escort Madame to her bedchamber, on the second floor of the mansion. She was very kind to me, was Madame, and took delight in showing me her gems, which were worth more than a king's ransom. In fact, the Van Lyne jewels were the talk of the whole country, and, as they have been described before and since the mysterious crime, I will essay no minute description.



Hillcroft, as the house was called, was a large old-fashioned affair, built many years before my coming to it. It had many curiously shaped rooms, some of which I had never entered, but the grand octagon chamber with its furnishings in dark mahogany was the most important of all.

Its tall front windows looked out upon the spacious lawn, which terminated at the fringe of the cliffs that overlooked the river, and from the conical observatory on the main roof, the view was magnificent.

From nine until twelve I had the house to myself, and upon this particular night, after seeing Madame to her room, I returned to my own apartments and took up a half-finished novel.

It was a night famous for its stillness. Not a particle of air was astir, and, soothed by the book I was reading, I forgot the outside world.

By and by I was startled by the fall of the book to the floor, and when I looked up at the little gilt clock on my mantle I was surprised to note that the hour of twelve had arrived.

In another moment I was out of my room and on my way to the octagon chamber.

I unlocked the door carefully, as was my wont, and entered.

Madame appeared to have fallen asleep in her chair, with the jewel-box open on the table before her, and I tiptoed forward to acquaint her of my presence.

But the moment I got a look at her face I recoiled with a cry which must have rung throughout the entire house.

The deathly pallor of the face before me sent a chill through my blood, and for half a minute, at least, I was incapable of sense or motion.

That Madame was dead, I well knew, but this was not the real horror of it.

There were crimson spots on her white gown, a little trail of red over one of the hands, and the deathly stare in the eyes confirmed the terrible suspicion of crime.

I looked wildly around the room, seeing little less than my own shadow on the wall, then I bent over Madame and spoke to her. But my words were useless, for the lips did not move, and the stare seemed only to deepen.

I did not even lift the scattered jewels into the box, but bounded from the room and fled down the hall.

I knew where Miss Roxy, an adopted daughter slept, and in a moment I was hammering at her door.

To my utter surprise the young girl opened it at once and appeared fully dressed.

"Madame—Madame!" I cried. "The octagon chamber!"

I was conscious of a stare from the girl, who the next minute had me by the arm and was shaking me into coherency.

"What is it?" I heard her say. "What about Madame and the octagon chamber?"

"Madame is murdered!"

"It cannot be. You are dreaming——"

"Would to Heaven I were," I broke in. "I have just come from Madame's room. I——"

The girl darted past me with an inarticulate cry, and ran forward. I followed panting and white faced at her heels.

"You've locked the door, wench!" she exclaimed, as she tugged at the knob.

It was the first time she had ever addressed me thus; my Duplessis blood surged hot through every vein.

"Not that word!" I exclaimed. "My blood is as good as yours, miss. I am the equal of any American——"

I checked my rising anger and handed her the keys at my waist.

She knew the one which fitted that particular lock, and I saw her insert it and open the door.

She sprang into the room and in a moment was at Madame's side.

One look sufficed.

"She is dead—murdered!" I heard her exclaim, and then, to my astonishment, she became terribly calm.

"Are the jewels gone?" she said.

"Look for yourself. You know them all," I answered.

She turned from Madame and lifted the gems from the jewel-box. I watched her as she handled each strand separately, and saw her replace them in the box.

"When did you discover this?" she cried, turning upon me. "Where have you been all this time?"

I reminded her of my duties, and said that I had carried out my instructions to the letter, as I had many times before.

"Then, who could have committed this crime, and why?" she demanded, just as if I could solve the red enigma.

"This is a matter for the police," I replied, and I fancied that a shudder passed over the girl's frame.

"Shall I rouse Peter?"

Peter was the coachman, and had a room in one of the outbuildings that adjoined the main mansion.

"Wait."

Roxy went over and locked the door.

Then she looked down into Madame's white face and recounted the jewels again.

After this she proceeded to search every nook and cranny of the octagon chamber, my eyes following her at every step. Somehow or other, her movements fascinated me, and I could not forget them for many months afterward.

"Now," said she, desisting at last, "now you can inform Peter."

"Aren't you afraid to remain here, miss?"

"Why should I be?" she cried. "Madame Van Lyne is dead and the dead are harmless."

I turned and ran out of the house. Overhead the stars were shining and I heard the whistle of a boat on the river. Even as I ran toward the coachman's quarters I recalled the one thing that had startled me almost as much as Madame's terrible doom, and that was the appearance of Roxy at her door fully dressed.

Peter was brought from sound slumbers by my first cry, and in a second was bounding toward the mansion. It was more than I could do to keep him in sight.

Instead of going direct to the chamber of crime and mystery, I returned to my apartments and steadied my nerves with a little wine, which Madame had been kind enough to give me, then I felt strong enough to face the spectacle beyond the door of the octagon room.

I found no living soul there but the girl.

"Where's Peter?" I ejaculated.

"I've sent him to the station to inform the officers."

That this was the proper thing to do, I did not doubt.

"We will leave Madame as she is until they come," continued Roxy. "I will lock the door."

She was as calm as one could be under the exciting circumstances, and we left the chamber, Roxy locking the door behind us.

"It may be daylight before they get here," she said to me. "Did you hear any noise, girl?"

I told her that I had heard no suspicious sounds since locking Madame in.

"What were you doing in your room? Asleep?"

"I started in to read and may have fallen asleep over the book. I was waiting for twelve o'clock."

"By Madame's orders?"

"Yes."

"You were waiting, you say?" and she came close to me and looked me in the face. "You say you were waiting?"

"I have told you," and my blood grew hot again. "And may I ask what you were doing all this time?"

"You found me in my room?"

Her manner was insolence itself.

"I found you there, yes, but fully dressed," I retorted, and the next moment I felt ashamed of my words.

She turned a little pale, but mastered herself in a moment and said calmly:

"We must wait until the coroner comes."

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH I CAUSE A SENSATION.

The wait for the officers of the law seemed endless. They came as the first beams of the morning sun silvered the waters of the Hudson, and at once began their investigation.

The coroner was a little man who seemed puffed up with self-importance, and he was accompanied by a detective named Duncan Miggs. I was not favorably impressed with either, but the detective had not been long on the ground before I felt that he was a man of some acumen, and perhaps the very man who should have been sent to solve the mystery of the octagon chamber.

Of course the news of the crime spread like wildfire, for Madame was known everywhere, and by the time the coroner's jury sat in the mansion in the afternoon the whole population of the district seemed present.

Coroner Smock organized his court with dispatch and proceeded to business. He wore large spectacles which lent to his face a comical appearance, and many joking remarks went round the room despite the solemnity of the occasion. Owing to my connection with the tragic events of the night, I was one of the first witnesses called. It was my first acquaintance with a coroner's court and, of course, I found the gaze of every one centered upon me.

I must have passed through the ordeal with some intelligence, for the coroner bowed to me at the close of my testimony and called Miss Roxy.

I never kept any notes of the proceedings but every word remains to this day in my memory.

Miss Roxy came forward at mention of her name and dropped into the chair assigned her. She was pale, but calm, and I found myself watching, wondering what she would say and what the coroner would bring out.

"Your name, miss?" asked Mr. Smock.

"Roxy Gordon Van Lyne."

"Are you the daughter of the deceased?"

"I am her adopted child."

"How long have you been with Mrs. Van Lyne?"

"Ever since my fourth birthday."

"Where were you last night?"

"I was in this house."

"Did you, between the hours of nine and twelve, hear any unusual noises?"

"I did not."

"In what part of the house were you, miss?"

"In my own room, which is in the west wing."

"Do you retire early, Miss Van Lyne?"

"I generally retire between nine and ten."

"Tell us, if you please, how you learned of the deplorable tragedy which we are now officially investigating."

I bent eagerly forward to hear what Roxy would say. After a little silence she proceeded and gave a clear account of my sudden appearance at her door with tidings of the murder. In this she simply confirmed my own story.

But not a word did she say about my having found her fully dressed when I first saw her.

I was sitting close to Duncan Miggs during Roxy's ordeal, and her failure to acquaint the coroner with this fact aroused me and sent my blood rushing through my veins. I leaned forward for the purpose of calling Miggs' attention to it, but just then the coroner left this field and entered another.

"Miss Van Lyne," said he, readjusting his glasses, which had slipped down over his nose, "do you know of any one who might have committed this crime?"

"I cannot recall any such person."

"Mrs. Van Lyne, then, to your knowledge, had no enemies?"

"None."

The next question of the official startled me.

"Whatever became of one Conrad Monk?"

At this Roxy flushed a little, but recovered in a moment.

"You refer to the young man whom Mrs. Van Lyne once kept as her private secretary?" she said.

"Yes, I refer to him."

"He left her employ a year ago."

"What was the difficulty, Miss Van Lyne?"

The face of the witness paled again and she was seen to hesitate.

"There was a difficulty, was there not?" demanded the coroner, who seemed to think that at last he had struck "pay dirt."

"There was a slight misunderstanding between my benefactor and Conrad Monk," she said at last, feeling that all eyes were upon her.

"What was the nature of it?" asked the coroner.

"It had nothing to do with this terrible matter," was the startling reply, at which the hand of the detective dropped rather suddenly from his knee.

Coroner Smock was silent for a moment, and then raised his eyes to the face of the witness.

"Do I understand, Miss Van Lyne, that you refuse to answer my question?"

"You may take it in that light."

The speaker's lips closed firmly behind the last word, and I caught a determined flashing of her dark eyes.

"I cannot believe, miss," resumed the coroner gently, but with a certain degree of firmness, "that you would for a moment check the cause of justice. This is a diabolical crime that cries for vengeance. A woman, well known and your benefactor by your own admission, has been murdered in cold blood, and the law has undertaken to bring the guilty to the gallows. I trust that no consideration you may have for any one in the remotest degree connected with this crime will cause you to seal your lips. Every man is innocent until proven guilty, and all men are entitled to the benefit of the doubt. I have not even so much as remotely intimated that Conrad Monk is under suspicion, therefore I cannot see why you should refuse to answer my question."

During the delivery of these words Miss Roxy sat in her chair in the attitude of one carved from marble. She seemed to see no one, though she must have known that every eye was fixed upon her.

A deep silence followed the coroner's words. One might have heard a feather fall upon the carpet.

"I shall put the question once more," resumed the coroner. "What was the nature of the misunderstanding that interfered with Conrad Monk's employment by the deceased?"

The lips of the witness, which fell apart as if she intended to reply, closed again and did not part.

The coroner was evidently embarrassed.

"Do you absolutely refuse to answer?" he said, leaning across the table.

"I do!"

While the girl was playing her strange card, I had quietly taken my note-book from my pocket, and with a little pencil had scrawled on one of the pages these words:

"Ask Miss Roxy why she was dressed when Miss Duplessis told her of the murder."

This leaf I tore from the note-book and slipped it into Duncan Miggs' hand.

The detective looked at it a moment, but did not throw a single glance toward me. In the most matter-of-fact manner he leaned toward the coroner and whispered a few words in his ear.

"That's all, Miss Van Lyne," said that official, and as Roxy rose from her chair he cried out as if a new thought had entered his head:

"One moment, please, miss. You will resume your seat."

The girl dropped back into her chair and looked across the table at the coroner.

"You were in your room, I believe, when Miss Duplessis came to tell you of the tragedy?"

"I was in my room."

"You have testified that you retire between nine and ten? But last night, miss, you did not retire between those hours?"

"I did not."

"It was a few minutes past twelve when Miss Duplessis came to your door?"

"I did not take any note of the exact time."

"You were awake when she came?"

"I—I——"

"Take your time and answer that question."

"I was awake at that hour."

"When you opened the door in response to Miss Duplessis's knocking you were fully dressed, were you not?"

Never shall I forget the start that Roxy gave at this. In a moment I regretted the writing of the note. I would have given the world if it had not entered my brain. But the deed had been done and there was no recalling it.

The girl sat rigid in her chair. Her white hands clutched the mahogany arms, and her teeth seemed to bite through her bloodless lips.

"Is it not true?" said the desperate coroner. "Why were you fully clad at that hour?"

A little cry, almost unheard, fell from Roxy's lips, her head dropped upon her bosom, and the room was still. The witness had fainted and I had done it all.

CHAPTER III.

THE FOOTSTEPS IN THE DARK.

It was not until after the exciting scene I have just narrated, nor until the coroner's jury had brought in the usual verdict that Madame had come to her death by reason of a stab in the back "by some party unknown," that I found courage enough to cross the precincts of that chamber of mystery.

It repelled me at every thought; there was something uncanny about it, though I had passed its threshold a thousand times. More than once Madame had leaned upon me with confidence as I guided her footsteps to the octagon room and left her there alone with her jewels, many of which, as she had often assured me, had glistened on the bosom of more than one bride of the old world. The gems had been carried off by the coroner and deposited, as I was told, in a safety vault in the city to await the final settlement of the estate by the court-appointed administrator.

It was conceded that the jewels, with Hillcroft, would pass to Roxy, though she seemed in no haste to claim them. She remained in the old mansion, going out but little and having but few words with me. I wondered if she suspected my part in the inquest, and sometimes when I caught her eye I fancied that it contained an accusing look. Deeply did I regret my action, though it was inspired by a desire to clear up the mystery of the tragic apartment. If she knew anything detrimental to Conrad Monk, why had she sealed her lips and refused to make it known? Certainly she should want to avenge the death of the woman who had been a mother to her, the woman who had not only taken her in, but who intended to make her the heir of her vast wealth.

The strained relations between us became at last unbearable.

I had fulfilled my duties at Hillcroft and there was nothing now to keep me longer there.

The world was wide and I thought of severing my relations with the place and seeking another position.

To this end I sought out Roxy one evening, and unexpectedly encountered her on the broad staircase as she was coming down from her own room.

She would have passed me with a mere nod had I not put out my hand and touched her flowing sleeve. Gentle though my touch was, she started and drew back to the wall.

"You will pardon me, miss," said I, "but, since my services are no longer needed here, I am about to leave."

She seemed prepared for this, for, to my surprise, she answered at once, "I have no need of you, Miss Duplessis (she had never called me Lorraine), if you will come into the library I will pay you off and you can go."

Her coolness nettled me.

"I have tried to do my duty," I began. "I——"

"You were hired to do that," was the interruption. "That was the contract Madame made with you."

I said no more, but followed her to the parlor where she turned on the light.

"This room will do as well as the library," she continued. "Now if you will present your account to date I will settle with you."

Madame, at her death, owed me but little, and I had the amount in my mind.

I watched Roxy as she counted out the bills, and I accepted them from her hands.

"You will let me remain until morning, I suppose?" I said. "I do not care to take the night boat."

"As you please," she answered, with a slight bow. "The room is yours until then."

With this she turned and swept out of the room, leaving me half-bewildered by the little episode.

I could have flung the money at her feet, and, indeed, for a moment I shook it at the door through which she had passed.

Excited by this little affair, I passed out of the parlor to my chamber, but I could not sleep. I had had a pleasant home for months, and to think now I had none, but was about to go out into the cold world, facing it, a lone woman, was enough to drive slumber from my lids.

The house grew still. I could hear no sounds: the very leaves outside were hanging listless on their boughs, and the little owl which nightly hooted dismally among the oaks was quiet.

At last, unable to remain in my room, I passed out and went noiselessly down the stair.

Since the tragedy I had not surrendered the key to the octagon chamber, but still had it in my possession. What impelled me to visit the old room I cannot say, but the desire was masterful. I could no more have resisted it than I could have taken wings and flown to the city.

I moved down the corridor and inserted the key in the lock. The door opened and I entered, closing the portal after me.

The chamber of mystery was wrapped in stillness and shadow. I recalled my last visit there and stood for awhile in the gloom, thinking over the whole startling drama of the ninth of June.

At last I found the table, and my hand came in contact with a heap of matches.

I was about to light one of these when my startled heart seemed to spring into my throat, and I became a statue on the carpet.

A slight sound, which I knew I had not made, had fallen upon my ears. It came from the opposite side of the room and seemed like a long drawn breath.

Who was with me in the octagon chamber?

I strained my eyes in vain. The gloom was so heavy that I could not have seen my hand if I had held it against my face. I had locked the door behind me and was quite sure that no one had followed me in.

Presently I heard a footfall on the carpet. The table was not far from the wall, and I immediately hugged the latter, holding my breath and hearing my palpitating heart in my bosom.

Would the other tenant of the chamber dare strike a light? But this did not worry me so much as the query as to how that person had entered.

The footfall was repeated. I heard some

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one moving about the room, going from place to place, yet not a word had fallen upon my ears. The excitement was almost more than I could stand. I felt my courage oozing out at my finger ends. I thought of crying out and demanding who was there, but each time the thought took possession of me I was driven to the refuge of my fears.

At last I heard the footsteps no longer. They seemed to have receded across the chamber, and for some time I believed that their maker was waiting for me to make a move.

The ghostliness of the place, the crime which had taken place there, weighed so on my spirits that at last, with an effort, I resolved to end it all.

I put out my hand toward the table and seized one of the matches.

The following instant I drew it across the wall sharply and saw the little flame spring into being.

Holding the light above my head I peered forward, breathless and white faced, looking in every direction, chilled to the marrow by the strange experience.

"Who is there?" I cried. "Speak, who is there!"

My words came back to me in a wild echo. I saw the heavy hangings of the room, the dull old paintings on the walls, the furniture, everything but a thing imbued with life.

My terrors increased. I thought of the ghost stories my old nurse used to tell me on the banks of the Loire, how the wind would shake the rose-bush when the ghosts walked, and of the white lady on the stair who carried her poor guillotined head in her hands.

In another moment I would have fallen in a faint at the foot of the table, if my eyes had not alighted on something that sparkled on the carpet near the opposite wall.

I knew it was not there after the inquest, for, with my own hands I had set the room to rights, sweeping every inch of it and dusting every particle of its contents.

Almost vulture-like I swooped down upon the object, and as my light went out I snatched up a ring, which I clutched with all the eagerness of a diamond hunter.

It was a ring I had seen a thousand times, a bauble with a ruby setting, and I used to think that in all the world there was not another like it.

With the prize in my possession I retreated across the chamber and passed out of it.

I was sure that the wearer of that ring had entered the octagon room while I was there, and had passed from it almost noiselessly, but how?

To my knowledge there was but one entrance, the one by which I entered. I had inspected the walls many times over, for, woman-like, I feared to leave Madame alone in that room with her priceless treasures.

Not until I was back in my own apartment did I open my hand. There it lay, the ruby ring, delicate, beautiful and valuable.

What would Roxy say?

Should I go to her and, laying her ring before her, tell her where I had found it? No, I would keep my secret. Some day, perhaps, I could return the bauble, and then, perhaps, she would tell me the secret of the octagon room.

Watching the ring, I awaited the dawn. We met but for a moment when Peter came to convey myself and my luggage to the landing, and Roxy held out a cold hand in parting. Perhaps she did not note the stare I directed at that hand. My heart gave a triumphant leap in my bosom, for I saw that the ruby ring she had always worn there was missing.

Would to Heaven I had restored it to her then and there!

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH I BECOME A THIEF.

A year rolled away after the tragic events I have narrated, events which are with me today, as vivid as though they were but a night removed.

I had left the great city by the river and obtained, through the influence of political friends, a desk in the Package Division of the Dead Letter Office at the seat of Government. It was a task I did not fancy, but it clothed and fed me and gave me a strange, inner knowledge of the foibles and errors of mankind.

I had kept no account of the movements of any one connected with the mystery of the octagon chamber. I only knew from chance rumor that Miss Roxy still occupied the mansion above the Hudson, and Duncan Miggs, whom I accidentally encountered on the avenue, informed me that, strange to say, she had never worn any of the family jewels, but kept them in a safety vault, as Madame sometimes did.

To Miggs the mystery was as deep as ever. He had lost every supposed clew and classified the murder as one of the strangest he had ever encountered. He had run down a hundred trails, to be baffled at the end of each, and rather dolefully told me that he believed that the crime would never be solved.

Such was the situation, when one day I took up a little package in my division and prepared to open it. A glance at the address told me that it had been mailed to "Miss Teresa Holmes, 988 Darrow street, City," which meant New York.

As I was accustomed to open hundreds of such packages every day, this particular one did not appeal to me. I balanced it in my hand a moment and then severed its fastenings, the knots of which were sealed with crimson wax.

It would be like the others that had never been delivered for various reasons, and the chances were that Miss Holmes would never hear of it.

Inside the wrapper was a wooden box, perhaps two inches in length, the lid of which was pasted down with linen. With my office knife I cut the fabric and opened the box.

A lot of cotton greeted me and, lifting it, I felt a sense of astonishment take possession of me.

There, on the bed of cotton lay a beautiful jewel, a diamond of the first water, as I well knew from the many I had seen and which I was too poor to buy.

My gaze became riveted upon the gem, not merely because it was a diamond of great value, but because I thought I had seen it before.

Madame Van Lyne had shown me her jewels so often that I had treasured the shape and size of each, from the tiniest one to the king gem of the lot.

At first I thought that the diamond was the only treasure of the little box, but when I lifted the cotton I discovered a bit of folded paper which I snatched at with unwonted eagerness. My fellow employes, immersed in work similar to mine, had not noticed my start, nor seen me gazing breathless at the great white diamond.

With trembling fingers I opened the slip of paper, and almost at a glance read as follows:

"Light of My Heart—This is but one of the many. It is as white as your soul.

C—M——"

"A lover's tribute!" thought I, as I read the single line. "It is a pity that the intended one never was permitted to gaze upon love's offering."

Had I never heard of the crime of the octagon room, nor known Madame, I would have thought no more of the dead letter package. It would have been passed on to the proper place, and, so far as I was concerned, that would have been the end of the incident.

But the diamond held me.

The longer I gazed at it the more I thought that it had belonged to Madame's collection, and yet it was said that not one of the lot had been abstracted by the murderer.

With the paper in my hand I glanced up and encountered the calendar on my desk.

It was the very ninth of June!

This coincidence sent my blood hurtling through my veins, and the little note almost fell from my hands.

It was then under the spell and strain that I, for the first time, broke the rules of the department, for the first time in my life, and the only time, I became—shall I say it—a thief!

I could no more have resisted the impulse of the moment than I could have carried off the great building in which I served the Government.

As the note did not describe the diamond, I hastily jerked from my finger a ring with a white setting and placed it in the box, with the note.

My brain seemed to whirl. I did not intend to rob the Government, nor keep what "C—M——" had sent his sweetheart, but I wanted one man, and only one, to see the stone and to hear from my lips how it had come into my possession.

It was all over in a moment.

At the close of work hours I presented myself to the chief of the division and asked for a layoff. He looked up with astonishment and passed his long fingers through his grayish whiskers.

"My dear Miss Duplessis," said he, "it is not your time for a holiday."

"I am aware of that. But won't you let me off, say, for five days?"

"Is it sickness, or death?"

"It is neither."

"A wedding, then?" he said with a smile.

"Neither is it the altar."

"We cannot grant your application. It is impossible."

"Then you can have my resignation."

"Are you not satisfied here?" he exclaimed, as his look of amazement broadened. "You are on the list for promotion, Miss Duplessis."

"Which does not deter me from leaving the service if I cannot have a holiday."

"I am very sorry. When would you quit work?"

"Now, this very hour."

He looked at me a moment longer and evidently thought that he had a determined woman to deal with.

"It is our loss, then," he said. "You will leave the department with its best wishes."

That was all.

With the white diamond in my bosom I walked out of the building, no longer in the service of the Government.

That same day I took the train for New York, and once more found myself amid the whir of that mighty metropolis.

My first errand, after a little rest, was to the little office where Duncan Miggs, detective, held forth.

The sleuth almost bounded from his chair as I strode into the room and stood before him, like one who had come back from the dead.

"You?" he exclaimed, as his keen eyes ran over me from head to foot. "I thought you were in Washington?"

"I have just come from the capital. I am no longer in the employ of the Government."

"What has happened? You women take queer spells sometimes, but I never thought it of you, Miss——"

I waved my hand in silence and drew a chair up to his table.

"I have robbed the mails," said I with a smile. "If you wish I will show you the proceeds of my villainy."

"You, a thief? You, Miss Duplessis? Never!"

I took the diamond from my bosom and uncovered its wrappings of tissue paper. As the beautiful stone fell out before his gaze he recoiled and gave utterance to an exclamation of surprise.

"Wait until I have told you everything, my suspicions and my temptation," I said. "I may be mistaken, but something tells me that here is the clew you have lost."

"The clew? What clew?"

"The clew to the murder in the octagon chamber."

"In that stone?"

"Yes."

Then I proceeded and told him everything. I scribbled upon a bit of paper the line which I had found in the little box with the white gem. I even tried to imitate the handwriting.

"But, my dear Miss Duplessis," said Duncan Miggs, "I believe every diamond found in Madame's room was accounted for."

During my journey to the city I had thought of a thousand things tending to confirm my suspicions. The one thought most tangible, yet a venture, I laid before him with beating heart.

"What if this were the real gem and the other paste?"

Duncan Miggs leaned across the table with a singular leer in his greenish eyes.

"There's the making of a good—well, a good theoretical detective in you, Miss Duplessis," he said. "I had never thought of that contingency."

"Well, if this diamond should turn out to be real and the ones in Madame's strands paste, what would you say?"

"I would say that Duncan Miggs is a ninny!" he answered. "It's worth looking into. As a detective I can have access to the Van Lyne diamonds at any time. By Jove, girl, you may be correct after all! Come, the bank is still open."

In another moment I was following the excited detective from the place.

It was not far to the banking house, but it seemed a thousand miles to me. When we were within two squares Duncan Miggs dodged into a little jewelry store and came out with a Shylock-looking man, whom he took with us.

We got access to the Van Lyne deposits, and in a back room they were laid before the Jew.

I felt my heart beating like a trip-hammer in my bosom.

It all depended on the verdict of the cunning Hebrew, one of the best judges of diamonds in the whole city.

At last the agony was over. Levi Simon laid the jewels back upon the table and turned slowly upon us.

"Vat you think they're worth?" he asked.

"Two hundred thousand?" answered Miggs.

"Dey're vorth nothin' more than the setting. It's a pretty lot of paste!"

I checked a cry rising to my lips and felt my blood tingle.

"Paste?" cried Duncan Miggs. "Then this one is real?" And he handed the Jew the stone I had purloined.

The little bead-like eyes of the Israelite flashed.

"Dot is genuine!" he exclaimed.

"Not a word, my friend," and Miggs's hand fell upon the Jew's shoulder. "There may be something in this for you. We'll put this trash back. Now," in a lower tone to me, "now we will take up the old trail and never leave it until we've solved the mystery of the octagon chamber!"

I looked at him and smiled. Would we ever solve it now that it was a year old?

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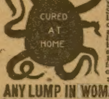

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CHAPTER IX.

RED ROVERS SEEK THEIR PREY.

RICHARD had heard the conversation take its present turn with alarm. As Mr. Volway he was supposed to be in sympathy with everything that was to be done, but butchery was not to his taste. Questioned, he came quickly to the front. His day of inaction was past. As one of the supposed leaders of the enterprise, he must be prominent.

"Why," he asked, "should there be any killing?"

"I see no need of unnecessary killing," replied Don Tomaso, "though, of course, if you wish it, I shall not object."

"I don't wish it."

"Then," added the urbane Spaniard, "we will make way with only those who oppose us. There will surely be fighting."

"Explain the situation in full!" directed Richard curtly.

"It is like this: El Casa Grande is a big, rambling house. It is the home of Senor Albanil. He has a score of servants. They ought to be in bed, and out of our way, but we cannot be sure of that. The box is in a room on the second floor. So is the girl. I know both rooms. I shall lead. You have but to follow. We will take what we want—really, we may be able to escape alarm and avoid fighting—and then we will flee. I shall go with you in this brig. That is all!"

"Simple as A B C!" quoth Rockett.

"What if Senor Albanil does detect us?" asked Richard. "What would he say to having the girl kidnaped?"

"Amigo, the box and the girl are dearer to him than his own life."

"Is she his daughter?"

It was Rockett who asked the question, but he put into words just what Richard feared to ask. Such ignorance on his part might lead to suspicion.

"His daughter?" cried Don Tomaso, laughing. "Hardly! No, he does not love her for himself, but because—well you both understand. She is what she is. That means she is more than gold and jewels to him, and more to us than she is to him. Nothing else on earth is so valuable as the box, but she come next."

Captain Gord Rockett, puzzled, rubbed his hairy chin.

"Why?" he asked bluntly.

"Oh! you must understand. Ah! we waste time here. Is all ready for work?"

"Ready!" returned Rockett.

"Then away we go. Get your boats adrift, man them, and let us act at once. Let every man bristle with weapons. Caramba! we should make a poor show if we all died in breaking into the casa!"

The Spaniard was on his feet, gesticulating, moving toward the door, impatient, his blood running fast and his nerves a-thrill for action. Rockett motioned, and Don Tomaso ran lightly up the companionway. The others followed more moderately. The skipper nudged Richard.

"Say," he whispered, "I'm square in a deal with my mates, but I can work better if I know the facts. Does that box contain gold or jewels?"

"Why do you think it is either?"

"Why the Lord's sake would there be so much rantin' about it if it didn't? Nothin' else can make it so valuable. Is it diamonds?"

There was an eagerness in Rockett's manner that gave his companion sudden worry. Confident that the skipper was an ex-pirate, and sure that nearly all the crew were of the same piece, Richard was startled. Once at sea, the game would be wholly in the captain's hands. For the sake of treasure he might murder all hands but his boon companions. The box was likely to be a breeder of crime.

"I'll be frank with you," the young man responded. "Lorrington and Todd own great estates here in Porto Rico, but the deeds have been abstracted. They are in the box. Their owners want them back."

"Humph!"

It was a grunt that might mean anything or nothing, though Richard was suspicious that it conveyed total lack of belief in his explanation. Just then, however, they found the Spaniard waiting for them, and they could say no more.

"Captain," put in Don Tomaso quickly, "will you get away immediately?"

"Quicker than you can yank a gasket loose! Here, Sawlton, get both boats clear and manned. Lively, now, my hearties!"

"But silent, silent!" urged the Spaniard. "Rowboats may be out. If we are discovered we shall never see the casa."

As the men began to hurry about light-footed, Richard noticed Ziol standing alone by the main-mast. It was impossible to read her face in the dark, but her pose was that of one ill at ease. He suspected that she wished herself back in Mobile.

The boats were lowered from the davits with as little noise as possible and supplied with oars. Then two crews were told off, four hands to each craft. Rockett decreed that Richard, Jeremy and himself were each to use an oar, which enabled him to leave three men besides the cook on board. Those left were named Loats, Bigler and Stone.

In a very short time the adventurers were off on their expedition. Don Tomaso sat in the foremost craft, constantly urging caution. The Americans could not equal the skill with which he rowed, but they were expert in their line, and they dogged him closely.

Presently the gloom of the dark night was pierced by a darker shadow, and they heard the lapping of water on an obstacle. Land loomed ahead. They were at the mouth of the miniature bay, and each stroke took them nearer their destination.

Richard pulled as well as he could, but he had never been in such uncongenial work. Even if no lives were lost on either side it was a bad business. He did not see his way out of it, however. Except for Daniel Grief, there was not one man upon whom he could rely for support, if he rebelled.

True, Jeremy Reith, shorn of all his loquacity and high spirits, was a fresh problem, but Jeremy was not to be considered as a friend.

Don Tomaso pulled on and the other boats followed. The bay was soon traversed and they drew near its head. He led them to a bit of a cove and then rested on his oars.

"We will hide the boats here," he announced. "Land, everybody, and draw them up under the bushes. Use the painters and make fast to the saplings. Be sure you tie knots that won't slip."

Again he was obeyed, and the Americans gathered by his side, ready for action.

"Come!" he directed. "Have your knives and pistols ready."

"Lead on, my hearty!" returned Rookett, wholly unconcerned.

"You will all obey me at the casa?"

"Why, sure! Eh, Volway?"

"For the time being," replied Richard, "I am only a passenger. You don't need to consult me."

"Come!" said the Spaniard again.

He led up a high bank, and level ground was before them. Beyond, the great house raised a frowning shape. It was as dark as the night. No light showed in any quarter. Its inmates probably slept, and marauders were drawing near.

Once, it occurred to Richard that freedom from his lawless companions was offered to him. He had the best of chances to take to his heels and flee into the darkness. Before they realized his purpose he would be out of pistol-shot.

In a way the idea was alluring, but he remembered other things. The people of Porto Rico were not of his sort. They were hot-blooded, one and all. The Spaniards were well enough when they wished to be, but the mulatto and full-blooded elements were practically savages. And there was war in Porto Rico.

Freedom among them might end within an hour, and then lead to torture and death. He decided to stick to the dubious company he had.

In a few minutes they were under the walls of the casa. Darkness and silence continued. The gate was swung to, but not even latched. They entered the court. Open doors stood around them. They had invaded where no foe was expected.

Don Tomaso halted his party.

"Two of you"—he touched the chosen men lightly—"will remain here on watch. If anybody comes from the outside, slip in and notify us. Two more"—here he touched Richard and a sailor named Attell—"will stand in the hall within. The actual work is for the rest of us. Now for quick action. Come!"

The party filed into the house. A few yards farther on the leader dropped two of his followers, as planned, and then the others slipped softly along in the gloom and the venture was fully on. For a time Richard heard their light movements, and after that silence fell.

He found it a nerve-trying period. The lawless nature of the work, the utter darkness, the suspense—these things worried him. Whatever happened he was party to it, and the evidence of his associates would place him as chief conspirator. Visions of a court of law, of a prisoner's dock, of charge, evidence and conviction floated before him.

For a law-abiding man, he was in strange company and in wretched work.

Presently he forgot everything except attention for what was being done beyond. He leaned forward, listening intently. How long was the silence to continue? What would break it? Human cries, or pistol shots?

Believing that a woman could not be abducted without alarm, he waited for the inevitable.

Attell pressed closer to him.

"Say, it's a jolly go, ain't it, sir?" whispered the sailor.

"Do you think so?"

"I sure do. Wish I was along. Why, sir, there may not be no fightin' here."

"Do you long for fighting?"

"That I do. I'd jest like a chance to play knife against one o' them islanders. I know how, an' they ain't no more than heathens. Oh! but I do hope we shall have a prime old rumpus with them!"

"You may get it."

"If I do, mark it down that I'll lay out a few niggers!"

There was great longing in Attell's manner, but Richard was not surprised. The fellow was rough, reckless and brutal, and it was to be doubted if any work would be too lawless for him.

Silence fell again. The pause grew more burdensome to Richard. He wished the matter well over with, whether it was with success of failure for a sequel.

His vivid imagination pictured the progress of events above. He could almost see his companions skulking about, seeking the box and the woman, silent knaves who moved furtively and held their weapons ready for mischief. He saw them poking here and there, invading private premises, thieves in the night, scoundrels who cared for nothing but success.

And he was their reputed leader! Oh! for the end of it all, and for freedom and the air of Mobile, and his true identity as Richard Dalton!

Then interruption came to his meditations. Sudden as the voice of doom a sound rang out above—the scream of a woman! Keen, loud and terrified, it burst upon his ears with intensity that made his heart dull in pulsation and then leap wildly.

"We're in for it!" cried Attell. "Ready with yer pistol, sir; it's to be a wild fight!"

CHAPTER X.

FLIGHT UNDER FIRE.

Secrecy was done with then. A loud order rang out, followed by more screaming, and the heavy tramping of feet was added. As if the whole nouse stirred, sounds of moving persons were added to the commotion.

Richard stood inactive. He was at a loss what to do. As long as Rockett and his allies did not murder, he was obliged to let them proceed, but the sounds were ominous. Rather than see them go to an extreme he would cast prudence to the winds and act in defense of the weak and helpless.

But now there was motion on the stairs. Men came rushing down, seeming to plunge at the treads as if shod with iron, and making a great clatter. And all over the building shouts of males were mingled with the screams of women.

It was soon seen that, in the midst of the hubbub, the kidnapers were keeping cool and sticking to their work as steadfastly as a rushing river. The tramping grew nearer; then men ran toward the sentinels through the passage.

"Volway?" called Captain Rockett.

"Here!" Richard responded.

"All clear?"

"As far as I know, yes."

"All hands, run!"

Something like a tornado beat beyond, and as it was clear the kidnapers would fill the way from wall to wall, Richard and Attell fled before them. Passing the door they found the watchers in the court in a state of excitement. Before they could ask questions the main body burst into sight. Richard saw that Rockett and another man carried a human figure in white that squirmed in most lively fashion, though no sound came from that person.

"Keep together!" ordered Rockett. "Away to the brig!"

The marauders were reunited, but sounds behind grew in volume. It was a medley of cries in all keys, and it was clear that El Casa Grande was thoroughly aroused. The rough fellows from the Red Rover would have liked nothing better than to linger until shots could be exchanged, but Don Tomaso had given his ultimatum, and it was to be boiled down in one word—flight!

The kidnapers ran out of the court and had the open air with them. Due south washed the waters of the bay, and the brig rocked beyond. It was their place of refuge, and they went as fast as possible.

Don Tomaso had prpmptly taken the lead, and Richard noticed that as he ran, he carried a box in his hands. The double purpose of the foray seemed to have been achieved. In the fruits of the success there was, however, a great difference.

The box was a passive burden, while Rockett and his assistant were having no end of trouble with the object that struggled in their arms.

"Them chaps in the big house are mighty slow!" exclaimed a sailor.

Don Tomaso turned his head.

"I don't fear those who are there so much as——"

He was interrupted. Several shots sounded from the casa.

"It is the alarm to others!" added the Spaniard. "I was afraid they might have men near the water. Watch well, amigos, and be ready to fire if we are headed off. It will be their lives or ours!"

Men did not appear in the path, and they reached the water in safety. The leader had headed for the cove with accuracy.

"Cast off the lines and get all boats afloat!" he ordered. "I shall go with you, and let you put me ashore before morning. I dare not stay here. Quick—tear away the painters! Oars, oars!"

Don Tomaso had grown nervous, and he looked to right and left with keen apprehension. He had addressed men who knew their business, and the sailors cast off promptly. Looking back Richard saw that the big house was ablaze with light, but he could see no pursuer. But for the Spaniard's worry, he would have thought the battle safely won.

All hands piled into the boats. Don Tomaso did not attempt to enter his own craft, but tossed the box under a thwart of one of the brig's boats, and was content to retain his own by climbing to the dangling painter.

"Oars, oars!" he cried again.

It was an unnecessary order, for the tars were doing their best. They dipped the blades, and the marauders shot away. Richard was so near to the kidnaped woman that her garments touched his foot, and he grew surprised as he noted how she still struggled, but nothing seemed able to check her writhing.

Suddenly Don Tomaso laughed.

"A few fathoms more and we shall be all right!" he said lightly. "There are men who hover along the coast, and I feared

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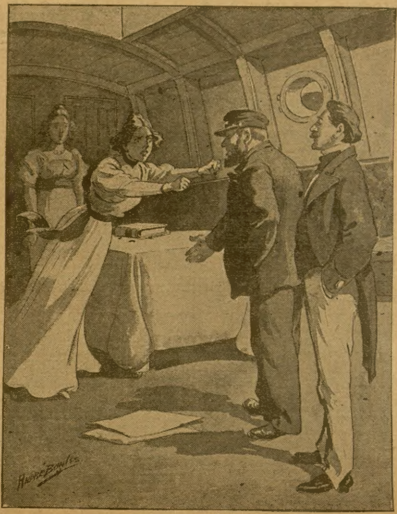

She made a rush for Rockett.

some of them might intercept us. If they did——"

The speech was stopped short. A series of flashes spotted the darkness of the shore behind them, and well known objects went whistling around the men afloat. But there was more. Don Tomaso half-rose, clutched at his breast and then toppled over the gunwale. One moment he was before them; the next, and he was gone from sight under the rippling water.

As if moved by one mind the seamen stopped pulling. The boats drifted, and on all sides faces were thrust forward and eyes scanned the water. But they saw nothing of the fallen man.

Other bullets whistled around the kidnapers. A chance shot sent splinters flying from a thwart. Shouts, and, also a peculiar whistle, came from the shore.

"Our ally is gone!" muttered Rockett. "We must get out of here or we shall share his fate. Anyhow, he's dead!"

"He ought to rise," said Attell.

"He may, in a week or two. I ain't willin'——"

The captain paused, hesitated, and then a shout answered the men who had done so much damage.

"They've stirred up their confederates!" added the captain. "If we stay here we shall share his fate. Oars, my bullies! Pull!"

The command was welcome. Reckless as the crew were, they did not covet too many enemies at their heels, and they were of one mind. Once more they bent to their labor and the boats resumed their journey.

Richard, not being accustomed to wild life, was shocked by the sudden end of the Spaniard. Don Tomaso had not appealed to him strongly, but he was a man with education and intelligence, and the calamity that had befallen him so unexpectedly sobered the American more than ever. He did not know what Don Tomaso had been, but he knew what he now was.

The Red Rovers were pulling lustily, and the boats left the hostile shore rapidly behind them. Voices sounded from the land, but the island people did not seem to be supplied with ready boats. As yet, there was no sign of pursuit.

The fugitives were fortunate in steering for their vessel. In a short time the bulk of the Red Rover appeared in the darkness. They hailed the deck, an answer came in Eldad Sawlton's voice, and in a few minutes they lay alongside.

Boarding was made difficult by the writhing of the prisoner, but Captain Rockett showed scant consideration, and they had it over with as soon as possible.

"Hoist the boats, loose the sails, brace the yards and get out of this immediately!" was the captain's brief command.

Urging was not needed. Reckless as the seamen were, they did not aspire to have all of Porto Rico on their necks, and they worked with the skill of veterans. With the boats on the davits the men swarmed aloft and made ready. It was in their favor that the breeze was from the land, and if they were let alone the Red Rover would soon be footing it in more remote waters.

Rockett had carried the prisoner below and then returned. Richard felt himself useless, so he stood in the stern, the point nearest land, and watched and listened. Voices no longer came from that quarter, but he was not deceived. Boats must be a necessary adjunct of the lives of the coast people, and they would soon be in use.

And so it proved. The canvas was just spread and efforts were being made to catch the breeze when a rhythmic dip reached him.

"Coming, captain!" he announced sententiously.

"Well, let 'em come!" retorted Rockett. "We are goin'!"

"I hope there will be no more fighting."

"Do you? Well, I just hanker for it! We ain't in their clutches now, with them acres o' their old land for them to antic on. Let them try to board us an' they will get their fill. Men, pistols, pikes, an' belayin'-pins, we are more than a match for them. Let 'em come!"

"I am sorry for our late ally."

"Don Tomaso? Why, yes, of course, but then, man is mortal an' bound to wane like the yeller leaf. What impresses me is that by losin' the Spaniard so abrupt-like, we can't have his advice an' orders. But I s'pose you know all we need to do."

"Don't you? What did the paper in the clock say?"

"Sail for Mobile."

"There you have it."

"Yes. Dead simple, unless——

Eldad Sawlton approached hurriedly.

"Beg pardon, sir," he interrupted, "but them boats are gettin' too close for comfort."

"I hear them; yes, an' I feel right comfortable. We're movin' an' they can chase us as far as they want ter."

"They are bound to board us!" exclaimed Richard. "They are very near. We shall have them swarming over our rail."

"But we move—still, I reckon they will make it. All hands, ahoy—pistols an' pikes to repel boarders!"

Weapons had not been put far away, and the crew equipped themselves with despatch. But, now, dark shapes came out of the darkness, showing boats and men. And the enemy shot forward toward the brig.

"To your stations, Red Rovers!" shouted Rockett. "Repel boarders!"

CHAPTER XI.

BEAUTY IN A TEMPEST.

The battle-spirit had taken possession of Richard. He had felt no sympathy with the lawless attack on El Casa Grande, but the situation had changed. Now, it was a move to save their own lives, and he thrilled with desire to do his part.

He had caught up a belaying-pin from the fife-rail, and he took place with his companions by the bulwarks. Close to the brig he saw boats swarming with men, and they were cutting down the last fathoms that separated them from their coveted prey. Dark as it was, he gained the idea that most of the upturned faces were black, and it was clear that if they carried the deck slaughter would result.

But those final fathoms were not so easily eaten up. The Red Rover was moving, and gaining headway each moment, and while the foe beat water with greedy oars, the jaunty ship pulled away.

Derisive cries arose from the brig, and then the islanders burst into discordant, barbarous yells. Each faction had its words to say, and its language in which to say them, and they were noisy enough about it to call up memories of animals shrieking anger and disdain.

As if to give special help to the Red Rover, the wind had suddenly increased, the sails filled beautifully, and the brig disported herself in saucy fashion and began to reel off the fractions of knots like a sea fairy. Worse yet, for the enemy, she was raising a wash that caught at their boats, and they found more than smooth water to pull against.

Suddenly Captain Gord Rockett broke into a ringing laugh.

"By Neptune! we've got 'em! They can't catch us now!"

He was right. The islanders first failed to lessen the intervening space, and then began to lose headway. They tossed almost helplessly in the smother of foam flung back by the plowing keel.

Cheers rose from the brig, and tense hands relaxed their grasp, while set faces brightened into smiles. Jibes were flung lavishly at the now-despondent foe.

"All over!" quoth Rockett. "They might as soon chase a squall as this ship, when she's got her headway. Put up your guns, my hearties, and you shall have a glass of grog all around. Where's that cook?"

"You sent him below with the prisoner, sir," reminded Sawlton.

"So I did. Never mind. I'll have him up, for you must wet your whistles after this little shindy. How's that, bullies?"

"Ay, ay, sir," shouted the forecastle hands in chorus.

"Keep her to it, Mr. Sawlton," added the skipper. "I'll have a look at my charts an' see what our course should be. This new turn in events comes sort o' sudden, but there's room enough in the ocean, an' our port is Mobile. I reckon we shall——"

At that moment Golfo, the cook, appeared.

"'Scuse me, sah," he said, "but de ladies, dey want to see you in de cabin."

"They do? Why?"

"Why, sah, dat new lady, she's cuttin' up lively."

"The new lady?"

"That one you brung on board tied up, sah. When we got her in de cabin we obeyed orders an' untied her, an' took de gag from her mouth. Laws sake, she a'most tore de eyes out o' me, an' she's carried on wid her high-jinks awful. Miss Ziol, she say she want you to come below instanter an' tame your pet tigress!"

"Oh!" cried Rockett, laughing. "Sassy, is she? I like that; I really do, now. Lively spirits are to my taste. Mr. Volway, this is work for you an' me. Come on!"

He started for the companionway, and Richard was not reluctant to follow. He was curious as to the prisoner, and not willing to forego opportunity to see what she was like. He walked close after Rockett.

"I reckon she's a natyve," added the captain. "Quick-tempered race, you know. Have to be dealt with just so. Bah! our women have no tact—no woman has got tact. You and me can soon settle her hash, an' we will leave her obstreperous ladyship as content as a lamb in clover. Here we are!"

They surely were there. Entering the cabin they had the scene under full view. First of all stood Pansy, the stewardess, and she was trembling with fright; then came Ziol, firm enough in a way, but irresolute, and then—then the prisoner!

A young woman, tall, superbly formed, well-clad, white-skinned, black-haired, and starry-eyed, a beauty in every way, but—no wonder the cabin force had sent for help. The beautiful face was distorted with passion, the dark eyes blazed, the long, slender hands were clinched, and as she stood by the table, she was the incarnation of indignation and furious anger.

It was no passive prisoner that graced the Red Rover's cabin.

Gord Rockett stopped short. He had not expected a picture like that. All of his vanity and resourcefulness oozed out at his finger tips and left him stranded. He had seen women in temper before, but it occurred to him that this one was very high class. If he had been told that she was a princess he would not have been surprised.

They had interrupted certain words that were falling tumultuously from her lips. Their entrance checked her, and Ziol turned to Richard, fresh disdain in her manner. She waved her hand toward the captive.

"Your guest, Mr. Volway!" quoth she, sarcastically.

Richard was glad when Rockett saw fit to take the lead.

"What's she mad about, anyhow?"

"At Mr. Volway!"

"Why?"

"I don't know, but it seems to be a matter of etiquette."

"Have you questioned her?"

"Pray try it, yourself, sir!"

Now, Captain Gord Rockett had an eye for female beauty. He saw it then, if he ever had in his life, and he scraped his foot sailor fashion and bowed his best bow.

"Your servant, ma'am!" said he politely. "What can I do for you?"

The captive stirred into fresh life. She straightened up and found speech. A torrent of words poured from her lips—impetuous, bitter words, no doubt, but not a syllable could Rockett understand. He had sailed in many seas, and he caught the fact that this was a tongue unfamiliar to him. He looked again at Ziol.

"What does she say?" he asked.

"I don't know. Ask Mr. Volway!"

"Oh! What is it, Volway?"

"Not being a polyglot, I'll let Miss Jennison answer her own riddles," responded Richard drily.

"To relieve your suspense, captain," added Ziol, "I'll say at once that this young lady speaks some language wholly unfamiliar to me. I know Spanish, and so do Pansy and Golfo, but that's not the tongue of the prisoner. We can't understand her. She can't understand us. She is in a tearing passion, and has been talking twelve knots an hour, but it is all wasted. I turn her over to you."

"Thunder and Betty Martin!" muttered Rockett.

"And," pursued Ziol, "to Mr. Volway!"

Richard tired of the sarcasm. Not being a willing woman-stealer, he did not aspire to over-great notoriety. Angry, he retorted:

"I don't do work that was allotted to servants!"

Ziol flushed deeply. For days she had been unsparing of her biting speeches for him. He had been patient under trial, but he had struck at last, and with force. Practically, she was there as a servant, but she did not like to be reminded of that fact.

The captive had paused for a while and was looking first at one person and then at another, but she suddenly became active again. Sweeping majestically forward, she addressed Rockett vehemently. Her tongue poured forth words and her hands punctuated them with many gestures. She said something and then waited for an answer.

"Wish I could, ma'am," replied the captain. "What's your language?"

Another torrent of words.

"Spanish?" he asked.

She probably said no.

"French? Italian? But I know it ain't the first. Say somethin' in good civilized English, won't ye?"

(Continued on page eleven.)

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The foolish person who fools with a bee is apt to get a stinging rebuke.

Quickly made friendships are apt to fade the first time they go to the wash.

Don't accuse the old hen of working the shell game because the egg is bad.

One seldom scores a hit with his neighbors when he shoots off his mouth.

A soft answer many not always turn away wrath, but it saves a lot of time.

Success is the only thing that can turn a man's head when he has a stiff neck.

Some women abuse their husbands as a means of asserting their independence,

It takes an exceptionally smooth confidence man to sell mining stock to a miner.

It doesn't take a girl long to catch a husband after she begins to pose as a man-hater.

An old bachelor says an engaged man is as good as married and a divorced man is better.

Rather than start a rough house many an otherwise truthful man tells his wife fairy stories.

As soon as a girl gets old enough to know better she quits wearing pins along her waist line.

Follow in the footsteps of the average great man and you'll be surprised to find how small his tracks are.

When a woman has on a pretty pair of stockings she is terribly afraid of getting the bottom of her skirt soiled.

Mr. Harriman, it is said, is to take in the New York Central next. Any railroad that is holding out may as well surrender.

It has been decided by a United States court that the tobacco trust is a trust. Some of the neighbors had suspected as much.

If it be true that a buried lake lies in the way of the Panama Canal, it will have to be dug up and hung on the fence to dry.

England now has six Dreadnoughts, all of which some pocket edition of a flying machine may put out of business some day.

Though Democratic Governors were elected here and there that doesn't prove the successful men could have pulled through the Presidency had one or more of them been on the ticket.

Kaiser Wilhelm says he told Queen Victoria how to run the Boer War. He needn't take all the credit to himself, however, as he was not the only one. Every halfpenny journal in England was on the spot day and night with advice. In the provinces offering suggestions was the chief occupation of those who sat around the corner groceries and whittled sticks.

Janet Walters' Trial;

Or, A GREEK LETTER

By Leona Anstine Sutter

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CHAPTER VIII.

AN OLD woman sat crouching over a cold hearth, wrapped in a ragged quilt, and snuffed the tiny wind-blown candle on the table near by. Once or twice as a groan came from the rag-covered bed in the corner, the crone turned her head slightly, and the clots of candle-grease fell upon the worn oil-cloth of the home-made table.

"No 'onder you're groanin' and a moanin'," she said crossly once. "Stayin' out half the night with them lights is enough to put a finish on ye, and comin' in, as ye did, drenched with the soft snow."

"Shut up!" came in irritated, hollow tones from under the ragged covers of the bed. The old hag did not notice. None of her sons were filial or respectful.

She rose presently and made a niggardly fire and took down a skillet from the wall, putting it to heat on the rusty stove. Then she cut some thick slices of bacon and put them in the pan, and the smoke from the sizzling fat filled the room. The lank form under the ragged covers buried his head to shut out the odor that nauseated him, and the woman broke some doubtful case-eggs into the hot grease.

"I reckon you won't eat anything," she said questioningly, and receiving no reply except a disgusted snort from the other inhabitant of the room, sat down to her lonely repast, eating hungrily and greedily. When her appetite was satisfied she walked over to the bed. "Where's what you brung in tonight?" she demanded. "I want it—I'm goin' out and buy wine and fruit and juicy steak. You've got to have something to eat, and I guess you've earned it."

"Of all the fools——" he began and paused, shaken with a terrible paroxysm of coughing, and pressed a ragged quilt to his lips and took it away splotched with blood. "You'd have the cops here, would you, and not allowin' a man to die in peace. No, we've got to lie low with that for a while. When I'm well enough to hit the trail it'll be some use to us, but not now." His head fell back upon the pillows and he was very pallid from the exertion of talking.

Through narrow, winding streets, past dirty tumbled-down houses, a man threaded his way—a man wrapped in a fur overcoat. Two men were shadowing him, now and then pausing in the shadow of some building as the figure paused. Rounding a corner suddenly, they almost stumbled over the fur-coated figure, which had paused for some unaccountable reason as soon as the corner was turned, and now stood as though studying about something, perfectly motionless. With a muttered apology, the two men slunk off into the darkness, hoping that although recognizing they had not been recognized.

"Simons, as we thought, by Jove!" one of them said. "Now, what in the h——l is he doin' in this neighborhood? He's too busy with the banker's murder to be huntin' up anything else, but how could that bring him into this part of the town? It's plain as the nose on your face that Hastings killed him, and Simons is just smart enough to know it. Our only hope of the reward is to get Hastings' confession before Simons gets around to arrest him. I'd never delayed this long only I knew how determined Simons was Hastings shouldn't be arrested until the proof was altogether of his guilt. With what we have framed up we'll about get that confession in the morning. I saw him today, and he certainly looks as though his crime was wearin' on his nerves. He looked like a man walking about in a trance and his eyes was sunk away back in his head. I suppose he expects every minute to be arrested. What I can't figure out is why he doesn't make his get-a-way or why he ever came back at all. Like as not he thought he'd never be suspected of the crime before he came back, and now he's shadowed so he don't dare escape."

"That ten thousand'll come in handy, Murdock," Aimes said, pausing to light his pipe, "but I'd give the whole d——d shooting match to beat Simons on this case. I guess we'll just about do it. It was mighty lucky you're findin' that stiff at the morgue with the head caved. It'll do very nicely for the disinterred body of the banker. The one thing these murderers ain't proof against is the sudden sight of their victim in grave-clothes."

Murdock heard very little of this. He was still keeping in sight that fur-coated figure. Now he pointed after it. "Look," he repeated, "Simons is goin' up to Jim Arnold's dump! What do you suppose takes him there? Jim ain't out, is he?"

"Out? Yes, he was out a few days before the murder. Say, Murdock, you don't suppose Simons could be on the wrong scent, do you?"

"Don't go to feedin' yourself on fool hopes, Aimes," Murdock said quickly, but there was a little suppressed eagerness in his voice.

At that moment Simons was concluding a little soliloquy to the night air. "I'll bet Murdock and Aimes are about insane trying to figure what brings me to this part of town. They'd better be home guarding that stiff I heard them planning to use to get Jack Hastings' confession with. I might like to use that 'stiff' tonight myself."

He turned in at 43, and the old crone who lived there opened the door slightly and peered out, holding the candle in front of her so that she could see the face above the fur coat in the narrow hall. "I guess you'll let me in, Mother Arnold," he said kindly. "I'm Simons, and when I was on the Evening Star I did Jim a pretty nice turn."

With an exclamation of welcome, the old crone pushed the door open a little wider. "Come in," she said. Over on the bed a wasted form was raised and two hunted eyes looked out from the bed-covering, drawn up shielding the face.

"I reckon it's not a neat turn you'll be doing me this time, Simons," he whimpered. "Reporters ain't so bad, but detectives is a lot of blood-suckers. Pretty neat of you though, I call it, usin' that dodge on the old woman. You were allus a neat one, Simons."

The fever flamed away in the cheeks and glowed like two red beds of coals; the man had lost his bravado, the malady had laid such hold on him. Between every word there was a little gasp for breath. Simons had once studied medicine, and he saw now that whatever Jim Arnold's crimes might be, he would never live to expiate them. He must answer for them to a Higher Judge than any on earth. He reached out instinctively for the man's wrist and the pulse told him what he already knew. A long, violent spell of coughing shook the form upon the bed, and the red blood dyed the sheet and ragged counterpane. It turned Simons sick.

"You're in a pretty bad way—aren't you, Jim?" he asked, pityingly. "Poor Jim—I guess you haven't done many favors in your life. I wonder how you'd like to return the favor I did you once—now, tonight. There'll be a carriage here in a few moments and I want you to go on a little jaunt with me. After that I'm going to take you where you'll there'll be clean white sheets and warm bedding and good food. You're a very sick man, Jim."

Confidence returned to the man as he listened to Simons' proposal; every one instinctively trusted Simons. "I'll go with you, Simons," he said, stretching out an emaciated hand.

"Just to show you that I've no ill-will toward you, I'm going to return something to you, Jim," Simons said. The man's glassy eyes brightened with interest, and he stretched forth a hand for a dirty piece of paper Simons had produced. It was the convict's parole.

"Where'd you get it?" he asked huskily. "Where'd you get the d——d paper?" Its loss had occasioned him a good deal of anxiety, for he did not know where he had lost it.

Simons smiled slightly. "Never mind where I got it, Jim," he said. "I guess you know pretty well that I wouldn't turn over such an incriminating piece of evidence to you if I meant you any harm." Simons was staking a great deal on a certain plan he had in mind, and then, too, he felt sure that there could never be a trial of this man's crime.

Just at that instant there came a peculiar knocking at the door, as though it were struck with a whip-handle. The old woman answered it. "Kerrige, mum?" asked a voice, and Simons stepped forward into the light.

"I want you to help me carry a sick man down to the cab," he said to the cabbie, who stood waiting, wondering how it came that he picked up a fare in such a place.

The convict's mother, grumbling and scolding at her son's departure, brought a worn fur coat and a worn fur overcoat, and with Simons' help, put them on the invalid.

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As the two men lifted their burden, the crone turned her back, and a sob, quickly suppressed, quivered through her form. As the three men went bumping down the rickety stairs outside, the sob gathered to itself others, and snook the stooped old form as a cat shakes a mouse. Tears rolled down the hard, evil face, the first in years, and walking over to the table, she sank onto a box beside it and laid her gray old head among the clots of candle grease.

CHAPTER IX.

A rigid, motionless form was outlined under the white sheet in the dreary, bare upper room, resembling at a distance the first rude work of the sculptor when the marble begins to take on the dim form and shape of the statue to be.

An old green shade, the light filtering through a thousand pin-pricks, flapped at the window, casting a ghastly light over the solitary couch and the dust-grayed floor.

There were steps outside on the stairs, the tramp of men, quick, impatient, and the step of one mortally weary and dragging against his will. The door was suddenly flung open. Jack Hastings, pale, emaciated, a red fever spot burning in either cheek and eyes that glowed like dead coals, entered the room, closely followed by two others, each wearing a detective star.

Hastings looked about him curiously, drawing back instinctively as his eyes took in the ghastly outline under the green light. The detectives noted this recoil grimly.

"I thought you were arresting me," Hastings muttered curiously. "This—this isn't a jail!"

With an oath one of the detectives sprang suddenly forward and drew the sheet away from the body of a man that lay there, stretched in eternal sleep, already approaching dissolution. Under the glare the ghastly, discolored features seemed to grow darker, to mortify visibly, and a faint, horrible stench assailed the nostrils. The skull was crushed and the brain protruded as though it contained yeast.

Hastings' form seemed to shrivel up. His knees weakened under him and he staggered. With chattering teeth he moved nearer to the decaying form of the dead as though impelled by some horrible fascination.

"Recognize your victim, Hastings?" one of the men asked cruelly. "That there is the banker's body, with the hole in his head that you put there!"

"No—no!" Hastings muttered, approaching closer to the body, as though something apart from him were moving his limbs against his will.

He approached closer, fell to his knees. One hand was thrust out toward the corpse, and to the two who looked on it seemed to move without volition. It moved as though he were risisting it, out—out until it touched the ghastly brow. There was a recoil visible in every muscle of the kneeler's body, almost in the distended veins of the brow and hand, and he broke into horrible laughter, laughter long and loud at first, then dying away in the gurgle of a child.

"Brace up, Hastings!" Murdock said. His upper lip protruded more than usual and was raised in automatic triumph. "Tell us when you last saw the dead man."

It was formality merely. In every line of that crouching, chattering form, there by the bed, guilt was confessed, but just outside a stenographer listened ready to take down every incriminating word uttered that should help to send this murderer to the gallows.

Hastings shivered horribly. His eyes seemed starting from their sockets with horror.

"Tell us where you last saw the body of the banker," the detective repeated impellingly, slowly.

A long groan came from the kneeler, a spasm of despair, shaking his form. "He was lying on the floor in the private office of the bank," Hastings began in monotonous singsong voice. "He insulted me—my family—and I struck him down as he deserved. He fell without a cry, a heavy thud-thud, slipping along the floor and becoming very still—oh, so still! He was dead—dead—killed as he should have been and with no noise! It was so still in there—so—d—d, stifling still!"

The boy's voice died away in a whisper and his form stiffened almost cataleptically.

Triumph flickered on the faces of the detectives—not surprise. They had known the whole story, not a detail was different. Tomorrow the ten thousand would be theirs, and that smart Alec, Simons, who had been working like mad on this case, would be utterly humiliated—down and out.

There remained one more discovery to complete their triumph. They, too, knew that there had been a robbery. Agnew had talked too much, and they also knew the motive of that robbery. Hastings had been losing heavily at cards, and, while he had a large fortune from his mother, only the income was available, and it was probably not enough. Some one had tattled.

"Where's the money you stole from the deceased?" Murdock asked. "No use lying—the more of it you turn over the easier it'll be for you when your trial comes."

Hastings looked terrifiedly about, his hand wandering mechanically to his breast pocket. There was no escaping those hard eyes, fixed on his face. He hesitated, cringed muttered, fumbled with his pocket, and then with a cry like a hurt animal he tore from his pocket and flung upon the floor, as though they burned his fingers, ten one thousand dollar bills, each pierced clear through as though with some sharp instrument.

It was better than they hoped. The fellow had evidently been afraid to change the money, marked as it was.

"Hastings, I place you under arrest for the murder of Banker Walters," Murdock said formally.

The young man's eyes were fastened on his face in an apathy of staring. He hardly seemed to hear what they were saying, and on his haggard face the red flame blazed and blazed.

Racing triumph in their veins, the two detectives raised, half pityingly, the abject figure in the area by the couch and led him out of the room and down the rickety stairs, giving the stenographer time to get ahead with the short-hand report of the confession.

When they had delivered the prisoner over to the jail authorities, John Murdock, of the protruding upper lip and the yellow teeth, turned to Aimes: "We'll go and get the confession, sign up some affidavits and swear to them that it is authentic and given in our hearing, and then straight to the vice-president of the bank to claim the reward. The bills Hastings turned over to us will just pay it. It'll make old Agnew look up a little, eh? He's been pretty free with his criticism of this force, and storming around because we didn't arrest the lad." He brushed his teeth with his tongue as he spoke.

An hour later, armed with the confession and the affidavits, they waited in the reception room of the bank to see Agnew, for the interview that was to be the great triumph of their career, and amused themselves in the interval by spitting at a great distance into the cuspidor.

"He says you kin come in," the office boy presently announced, in much the manner a scullery-maid might say, "His Majesty."

The vice-president sat at a great desk in the far end of the room. He was glancing at some papers on his desk and did not look up when they entered. It was a way he had of impressing inferiors with his importance. Murdock and Aimes coughed simultaneously and apologetically to attract his attention and stood waiting nearer the door than the desk.

"Well?" the vice-president demanded, looking up and confronting them through his spectacles.

Then Murdock, taking courage from the great denouement he had to make, walked forward, taking little mincing, uncertain steps like a bear on its hind legs, and laid the confession and the affidavits on the vice-president's desk with the flourish of a hand-writing expert.

"What's this?" the vice-president asked curtly.

"The confession of Jack Hastings to the murder and robbery of the banker!" Murdock said in husky triumph. He was saving the money for the grand climax of the denouement.

"The h—l you say!" he exploded, although he was certainly not by nature a profane man, picking it up and reading it through, while Murdock and Aimes saw in his face a mixture of emotion hard to interpret, curiosity, surprise, ridicule, certainly not the awe they had expected.

"The world seems to be running to confessions lately," he finally said. "Perhaps you'll read this, which just came into my possession."

He took from his desk a sheet of paper and handed it to Murdock, who read it through in a puzzled way and then in a more puzzled way.

"Well, I'm blowed!" he finally ejaculated.

It was written on the stationery of the County Hospital, and was very brief and to the point. "I, Jim Arnold, killed and robbed the banker." It was written in a halting, ignorant hand, and witnessed by the matron and two doctors. It was dated that morning.

Murdock was biting his lips until they were almost bloodless. For a moment he had forgotten the money reposing in his pocket.

"What's this Jim Arnold want to confess to the murder of the banker?" he demanded. "He never done it! Why, you ought to seen Hastings in to view the body he supposed was the body of the banker and his victim. You see, we took that stiff they fished out of the river yesterday, and Hastings thought it was Walters' body, and the minute he seen it he broke down and confessed."

"Well," Agnew interrupted, "all I know is that they just sent this over from the County Hospital, and said that Arnold was dead, the last act of his life being to write and sign this paper. As he was gasping for breath he seemed to be seized with uncontrollable fear of the future, and indicated his intention of confessing something. He expired as he signed the few words he had written. It's a great note, when people get to confessing things they never did. Its enough to muddle the best police force on earth, which we haven't here to be sure."

Suddenly a sheepish grin passed over Murdock's face as the banker thus reflected. He dived into his pocket as though he was mad, and, fishing out the bills, handed them to Agnew.

"I reckon we've got the evidence to back up our confession," he said.

Agnew was handling the bills thoughtfully. Truly here was evidence! Then wrath overcame him at the puzzling situation. "Get out of my sight!" he roared, "and don't come back until you know why Jim Arnold made this dying confession. Arnold made this confession. Your whole force is made up of a lot of teething babies!"

It was unfair, utterly unfair, and crestfallen, Aimes and Murdock left Agnew's office.

CHAPTER X.

A few moments later the office boy announced that Father Murphy waited to see the vice-president. Now, Father Murphy was one of the few that Agnew, the exclusive, really liked, and it was ordered that he be admitted without delay.

"My son," the priest said, after greetings had been exchanged, drawing a long doleful breath, "I have just—that is within twenty-four hours—given absolution to a dying man and closed his eyes forever. This victim of the white plague in dying confessed to me that he was the murderer of Walters."

At this astounding statement the vice-president grew purple with surprise. Had the whole world gone mad? Would he, too, presently, be seized with this mania for confession, and perhaps put himself behind bars?

"Impossible!" he exclaimed. "Why the murderer—oh, hang it!—the murderers have just been discovered. One is in a cell at the jail, the other is at the County Hospital!"

"Set them free! Set them free!" the little priest of St. Mary's exclaimed in an agitated way. "The murderer has gone into the presence of the Great Judge. I myself closed his eyes and obtained his confession—as sad a one as you ever heard. The youth who confessed to me this dastardly crime is from one of the old Philadelphia families—the last of his line. Three years ago he was popular in college circles, although known to be wild and reckless. Before he was out of college he contracted tuberculosis, and his horror of the disease made him more reckless than ever.

"He lived rapidly, hastening the ravages of the disease and dissipating the modest fortune that had been left him. Less than a week ago he found himself ill and without funds. A doctor, here in town, told him that there was probably only one chance in ten thousand to prolong life over two months—a trip to the Southwest.

"He tried in every possible quarter to borrow enough money to take him there, and, failing to secure it, he spent his remaining money for liquor, drinking himself mad. Reeling past the bank the evening of the murder, and seeing the president's office lighted, a forlorn hope that he could obtain money here took possession of him.

"He entered the bank. As he opened the door of the inner office he was in time too the president transfer a roll of bills from the safe to his pocket. The sight of the money, which to him might mean the price of life itself, maddened him, and staggering in, he demanded it of the president, who, seeing that he was drunk started to kick him out.

"Incensed, frenzied by need and the fumes of alcohol in his brain, he seized an iron seal from the table, brained the banker and secured the money. It had, however, come to him too late to save his life.

"While visiting a little country parish, about a hundred miles from here, in which I have always been more or less interested, I was summoned to this dying boy's bedside to give the last absolution and perform the last rites. Before he died I secured from him the confession I am here handing you. He expired immediately after he took the pen in a wasted hand and signed the paper."

The priest paused with his recital, and the vice-president reached eagerly for the paper. For some reason he felt positive that at last he had come upon the true solution of the mystery that had been puzzling them since the night of the murder. He put on his spectacles and read the confession slowly. "To whom it may concern," it began, and here followed details already made plain by the priest, but this was not what he was so eagerly reading with his eyes lighting up intensely. In this confession was an explanation of nearly every clew that had been puzzling the detectives. The confession in full was as follows:

"I, who here make my dying confession of the murder of the deceased president of the Citizens' Bank, and the robbing of the dead body, began life much as other men in pleasant surroundings and attended by the love of mother and father. I inherited from my father a reckless disposition and the impulse for fast living. When my father died, some four years ago, my mother having died previously, and left me a modest fortune, I dissipated it with fast living, gambling and horses. During my senior year at college I was horrified to learn that I was a victim of a very advanced stage of tuberculosis.

"I became very morose for a time, and this period of moroseness was followed by a more reckless period than any I had ever known. I was determined that I would drain every cup of life to the dregs, and with the sun of pleasure shining on it, whatever the cost, before my strength succumbed utterly to the insidious disease. No hope was ever held out to me of possible recovery until a few days before the murder—then it came too late, for only a few dollars of my money remained.

"Mad with despair and contrition for the money thrown away that now might be the price of life itself, I drank and drank until for days I knew nothing. The evening of the murder, passing the Citizens' Bank, I saw a light in the president's office. A forlorn hope that he might help me formed in my brain and I staggered in. Perceiving my condition, he was very rough and started to forcibly eject me. I remember nothing more until I saw him lying dead on the floor before me, and I found myself searching his pockets for the money that I had

(Continued on page ten.)

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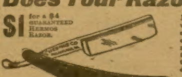

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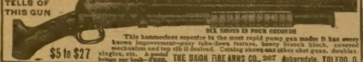

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TICKLISH

The Musical Girl.

"Has that girl next door to you still got the parlor melodeon?"

"No, she exchanged it for a cornet, I'm glad to say."

"But, gracious, if she plays the cornet that's worse, isn't it?"

"Not at all. It's only half as bad. She can't sing while she's playing the cornet."

Used the Stamp.

"You didn't use my manuscript," said the visitor severely.

"It was not adapted to our purposes. We couldn't use it."

"How about the stamp that was enclosed?"

"Oh, that was all right. We used it."

Tempting Fate.

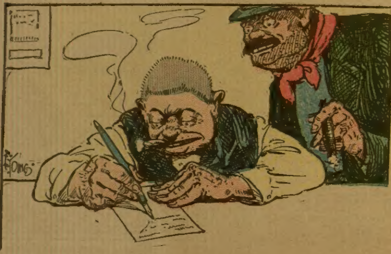
"What is your line of work? I can see plamly that you are due for a breakdown."

"I guess you're right, doc. I've just written my 400th motor novel."

Impossible.

Dentist (to garrulous woman in the chair)—"Now, madam, if you want me to fill this tooth you will have to keep your mouth shut."

MAKING PREPARATIONS.



"What are you writing there, Fritz?"

O, I'm going to break into a wholesale jewelry store shortly, and I'm sending for their pricelist!"

Little Bobby's Conundrums.

"Pa," said little Bobby, who had been allowed to sit up a little while after supper, with the understanding that he was to ask no foolish questions, "can God do everything?"

"Yes."

"Can he make a two-foot rule with only one end to it?"

"One more question like that," said his father, "and you'll be packed off to bed."

Bobby was silent for a few moments, and then asked:

"Pa, can a camel go ten days without water?"

"Yes, my son."

"Well, how many days could he go if he had water?"

The next thing Bobby knew he was in bed.

Too Deliberate.

Arizona Judge (to defendant in an assault and battery case)—You say the complainant called you a liar and a horse thief at least a dozen times before you knocked him down, eh?

Defendant—Yes, sir.

Judge—He said you were a coward and a quitter?

Defendant—He did.

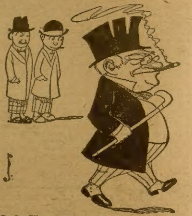
Judge—All right. I'll let you off on the assault charge, but—don't be in a hurry—I reckon I'll have to fine you just about $50 for not knocking him down sooner. The sheriff will take you in town to see that you cough up the dust before you pass out.

The One-Night Stands.

"Are you interested in studying the lays of the ancients?" asked the bard with Shakespearean locks.

"Nay, nay, me lord," responded the tall tragedian, "it keeps me busy dodging the ancient lays."

Genuine Article.



Cook—There goes a man who has made thousands of people happy.

Hook—A philanthropist?

Cook—Yes. He has granted more divorces than any other judge on the bench.

NEW LIFE

Found in Change to Right Food.

After one suffers from acid dyspepsia, sour stomach, for months and then finds the remedy is in getting the right kind of food, it is something to speak out about.

A N. Y. lady and her young son had such an experience and she wants others to know how to get relief. She writes:

"For about fifteen months my little boy and myself had suffered with sour stomach. We were unable to retain much of anything we ate.

"After suffering in this way for so long I decided to consult a specialist in stomach diseases. Instead of prescribing drugs, he put us both on Grape-Nuts and we began to improve immediately.

"It was the key to a new life. I found we had been eating too much heavy food which we could not digest. In a few weeks after commencing Grape-Nuts, I was able to do my own housework. I wake in the morning with a clear head and feel rested and have no sour stomach. My boy sleeps well and wakes with a laugh.

"We have regained our lost weight and continue to eat Grape-Nuts for both the morning and evening meals. We are well and happy and owe it to Grape-Nuts."

"There's a Reason."

Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich. Read "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

In the Drug Store.

"Have you any postage stamps?" asked the lady entering.

"No, madam," replied the polite attendant; "but we have something which tastes just as good!"

Less Expensive.

Tightwad—My baby is sick, doctor. What are your charges?

Doctor—Two dollars a visit.

Tightwad—Oh, I don't want you to make a visit—just a brief call.

GREAT LABOR SAVER.

In days of old the self-made man
His own horn loud did blow,
But now he buys a phonograph,
Winds it and lets it go.

A Crushed Frog.

A picnic was in progress and the benevolent and elderly lady took much enjoyment in seeing the delight of the children who were disporting themselves in her playgrounds. She went from one to another, saying a few kind words to each. Presently she seated herself in the grass beside Tommy, a little boy with golden curls and an angelic expression.

As soon as he observed her, Tommy set up an ear-piercing howl.

"Have you the stomach-ache," she asked anxiously.

"No, I hain't!" snapped Tommy.

"Perhaps you would like some more cake?"

"No!" roared the angelic child. "Wot I want is my frog wot I catched!"

"Frog?"

"Yes, my frog! You're sitting on it!"

Respectfully Declined.

Uncle Zebulon was on a visit to his nephew in the big city and the two had gone to a restaurant for dinner. They had given their order and were waiting for it to be filled when the younger man, who had been glancing at a paper that lay on the table, said:

"By the way, uncle, did you ever have cerebro-spinal meningitis?"

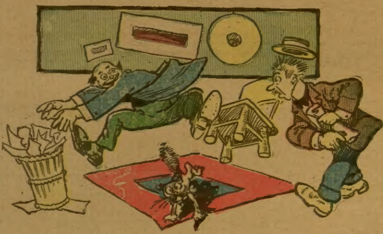
"No," replied Uncle Zebulon, after a few moments' mental struggle with the question, "and I don't want any. I'd ruther have fried liver and bacon any day."

Needed a Forge.

"Dearest," he whispered as the big amber moon swung over the hills, "let me rivet our hearts together forever."

"Rivet?" echoed the pretty girl with the big brown eyes. "Gracious, George! Are you a blacksmith?"

BLUFFED.



Tellit—Sir, I am a bill collector, I——

Dedbete—My friend, you've struck it rich! Here's a collection you may have at a bargain. Will you take it with you, or have it delivered?

Conscientious.

"Is this horse a good goer?" queried the prospective purchaser.

"I'm not saying anything as to his going," replied the conscientious owner, "but he has great staying qualities."

WAIL OF THE POET.

The melancholy days have come—
Now, this is not a joke—
The frost is on the pumpkin and
My overcoat's in "soak."

Everybody Satisfied.

Braggs—I'm nothing if not original. I like to be different from other people.

Naggs—Well, that's all right. Doubtless other people are satisfied to have it so.

We Will Give You a Job

Our offer to you means just what it says. So give us your careful attention and we will tell you the kind of work we want you to do. First of all we make portraits, frames, mouldings and deal in pictures of all kinds. We have a big business, our factory and ware-rooms are great big ones and we have an army of people employed both at the factory and throughout the country. Those working in the factory are artists, clerks, bookkeepers, etc., and in the country we employ men to collect money, deliver goods and take orders. Our men in the country who take orders and collect are the ones who make the big wages. We can't explain all about our business in an advertisement like this. But if you are honest and want a good job, we will give you a chance at our expense.

We have put a lot of our samples of portraits, frames and pictures up in a big sample case, the case is leatherette covered. Each portrait is full life size and each one has a cloth curtain cover to protect it. This sample case contains samples of our various kinds of portraits and illustrations showing styles of frames, etc. The case also has our great 250 page catalogue and our salesman guide. This case costs us $3.50 each to get up in quantities and we want to send one to you at our risk. We write you full instructions and show you how to commence work. You make half on all you sell. We want you to take orders and send them in to us. We send the goods which you deliver and collect for, you keep half and the other half is ours. The work does not require any previous experience and you can start right in as soon as the outfit is received. In order to protect us against idlers and boys who are after something for nothing we require you to send 50 cents as a guarantee of good faith (remember the outfit costs $3.50), after you have had the outfit for thirty days, we will return your money if you find you do not care to continue working for us.

We have been in business here in Chicago for seventeen years and we stand as the leader of our particular business. We are known as "the company that helps agents."

If you will start out taking orders you will make a success, provided you are honest and hustle. It is because so many make a good living at our work that we send you this big $3.50 outfit upon receipt of only 50 cents, and our fair offer means if you are successful you are glad you sent the 50 cents, but if you are not, we refund your 50 cents, so you see we take all the chances.

If you are looking for good steady work, at a pleasant, honorable business, you have found the right chance right here and now.

Don't write asking us a lot of questions, we make our offer so plain and so fair and square so as to do away with a lot of correspondence.

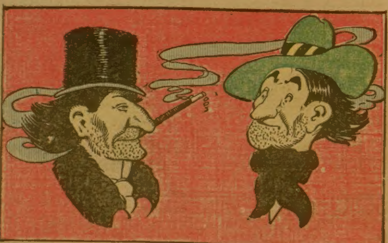
Just drop us a line inclosing 50 cents in stamps or money order and say: "Send me the sample case and full outfit and instructions." We do the rest, we send everything necessary to begin work at once, and a complete letter, etc., covering every question you could possibly ask.

We mean business, and if you mean business there is nothing further for you to do but to write us today, in fact, right now. The editor of this paper guarantees our offer to be genuine, and there is no risk on your part. The worst you can possibly do is to make a failure and be out of your 50 cents for thirty days. Only a very few fail, and those who fail have only themselves to blame, for it is their fault, not ours.

Get a pen and paper and write us now—don't wait until tomorrow. Address

Consolidated Portrait & Frame Company,
"The company that helps agents." 290-400 W. Adams St., Chicago.

NOT DOLLARS, BUT EGGS.



First Thespian—When I was playing in Kansas City and getting my two hundred a night——

Second Ditto—Hold on, there, Monty; make that five!

First Thespian—No, Jack; upon my honor—two hundred a night regular. Eggs are cheap out there.

TACKLES

The Train for im.

"How do you like your cousin who is visiting you?"

"He is the limit."

"Then why don't you send him home on the limited?"

A Western Inconvenience.

Eastern Farmer (contemptuously)—Catch me going West, where you have neither coal nor wood. Mighty inconvenient burning corn for fuel, isn't it?

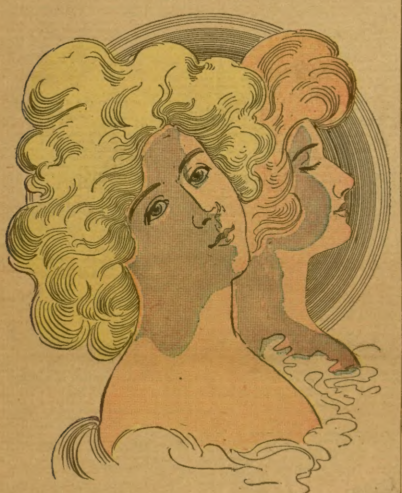
Western Farmer—Waal, yes, it is rather. The ears is so big we can't git 'em in the stove.

Life's Lessons.

Practical Mother—My daughter, now that you are engaged to be married, you should endeavor to become more familiar with the details of housekeeping.

Daughter—That's just what I'm doing, ma. I learned today that chewing-gum is a splendid thing for mending old tinware.

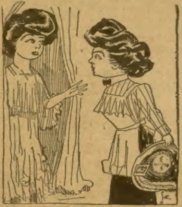
THE REAL THING.



Kitty Flies—Are lobsters a la Neuberg considered the best?

Belle Wings—No. Give me the lobsters a la Pittsburg. They are generally worth several millions each.

Verified.



Housemaid—You've borrowed the money that I had saved, you've worn my best hat when you went calling, and meanwhile I've had hardly half enough to eat! I can't stand it any longer!

Mistress—Didn't I tell you when I engaged you that we should treat you as one of the family?

Her Reason.

"Some women," said John W. Gates, "not all women, but some of them, are very poor speculators, very poor gamblers. A young friend of mine has a pretty cousin. He was going to the races the other day, and she called him up on the telephone and asked him to put $10 on Forest King for her.

" 'Very well,' he said, 'I'll do it if you pay me back.'

" 'Of course, I'll pay you back, you horrid thing,' exclaimed his cousin.

" 'All right,' said he. 'You didn't the last time.'

" 'Oh, well," said she, 'last time the horse didn't win, you know.' "

An Infallible Test.

An English squire was testing a man as to his suitability for the position of gamekeeper. At length he asked him how he would tell an old bird from another of later birth.

"By the teeth, sir," was the answer.

"But partridge have no teeth."

"No," was the calm reply, "but I have!"

Suspicious Conduct.

Patron—The conductor on car No. 999 is the most agreeable street-car conductor I ever saw. He is very polite.

Street-car Superintendent (alarmed)—Polite, is he? My gracious! He must be knocking down ten dollars a day.

Breaking the News.

"Father, was writing done on tablets of stone in the old days?"

'Yes, my son," replied the dutiful parent.

"Gee!" mused the boy. "Then it must have taken a crowbar to break the news."

HOW TO GET RID OF CATARRH

A Simple, Safe, Reliable Way and It Costs Nothing to Try.

Those who suffer from catarrh know its miseries. There is no need of this suffering. You can get rid of it by a simple, safe, inexpensive home treatment discovered by Dr. Blosser, who, for over thirty-four years, has been treating catarrh successfully.

His treatment is unlike any other. It is not a spray. douche, salve, cream, or inhaler, but is a more direct and thorough treatment than any of them. It cleans out the head. nose, throat and lungs so that you can again breathe freely and sleep without that stopped-up feeling that all catarrh sufferers have. It heals the diseased membranes and makes a radical cure, so that you will not be constantly blowing your nose and spitting, and at the same time it does not poison the system and ruin the stomach, as internal medicines do.

If you want to test this treatment without cost, send your address to Dr. J. W. Blosser, [illegible]7 Walton street, Atlanta, Ga., and he will send you by return mail enough of the medicine to satisfy you that it is all he claims for it as a remedy for catarrh, catarrhal headaches, catarrhal deafness, asthma, bronchitis, colds and all catarrhal complications. He will also send you free an illustrated booklet. Write him immediately.

His Little Scheme.

Hyker—That officeseeker made several sweeping assertions in his speech today.

Pyker—Naturally.

Hyker—Why do you say that?

Pyker—It's part of his plan to fill his opponent's eyes with dust, no doubt.

Wherein They Differ.

"One swallow does not make a summer," quoted the moralizer.

"No," rejoined the demoralizer, "but one grasshopper makes a good many springs."

As Others See Us.

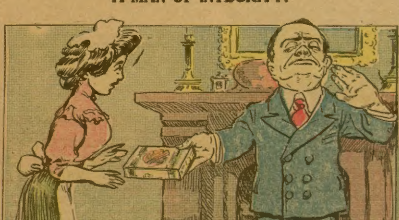
Blox—Anyway I'd rather be a fool than a liar.

Knox—It must be awfully nice to be self-satisfied.

NOTHING DOING.

Said he unto the pretty blonde:
"My dear, you are a peach,
And of peaches I'm quite fond."
Said she: "You cannot reach."

A MAN OF INTEGRITY.



Inspector—The impertinence! This firm tries to bribe me with a box of cigars! Pretty good quality, though—but it's all the same! Take 'em out, Elise, pack that hundred your father sent me for Christmas in the box, and give 'em back to the messenger and say the inspector thanks 'em, but he can't be bribed!

AGENTS WANTED

SWIFTLIT
WORKS LIKE CITY GAS
In Your Home or Store. No "Bonfire" to start it.
Lights like a flash with ¼ of a match. That's a fact which will cost you only 1 cent a day to realize if you use a "Swiftlit" Lamp. Think of that. Radically different from any lamp you ever saw or heard of. Just like City Gas and better than a dozen kerosene lamps. Gives from 100 to 500 candle-light power—a penetrating soft light, the best to read or sell goods by, or it will light your whole street front if hung over outer door. No alcohol expense or tedious waiting. Acts simply by gravity or pressure feed. Burners which fit old lamps supplied cheaply. Thousands of "Swiftlit" Lamps are used by the people of the U. S. [illegible] You can't afford to be without one. If you can be our Agent in your neighborhood, write for wholesale price on specimen "Swiftlit" Lamp. Now, don't put it off. Write today. Hear by return mail. Then order if you want to. You will. PLANET MFG. CO., Dept. 18, ST. LOUIS.

ELECTRIC GOODS—Big Cat. 3 cts. Want agents. OHIO ELECTRIC WORKS, CLEVELAND, OHIO

GO for wonderful new craze "Identification." Big money; you will say so. Agent's sample FREE. Kaytwo Mfg. Co., Roslyndale, Boston, Mass.

WE PAY $36 A WEEK and EXPENSES to men with rigs to introduce poultry compound. Year's [illegible] MFG. CO., Dept. D 67, PARSONS, KANS.

NAME CARDS. Agent's samples of the finest Visiting Cards you ever saw. All 5 cents. The Quality Print Shop, 131 So. 10th St., Reading, Pa.

AGENTS, CREDIT, Perfumes, Flavors, etc. Big profits. Express Paid. Terms Free. HERBENE AGENCY Co., Box 282, Sta'n L, New York

AGENTS PORTRAITS 35c, FRAMES 15c, sheet pictures 1c, stereoscopes 25c, views 1c. 30 days credit. Samples & Catalog Free. Consolidated Portrait Co., 290—30 W. Adams St., Chicago.

AGENTS $35 A WEEK; EXPENSES PAID. No experience or capital required; 30 days' credit; photo pillow tops 30c enlarged portraits, bromides, paintings, frames; lowest prices; samples and catalogue free. Dept. Z, Ritter Art Studio, Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS make big money selling our fine line of Fancy Goods, Embroidered Waist Patterns, Petticoats, etc. Catalog and samples FREE; liberal credit given. Address The Schwartz Importing Co., 1327 Washington Ave., St. Louis

AGENTS make big money selling our new sign letters for office windows, store fronts, and glass signs. Easily put on. Write today for a free sample and full particulars. Address METALLIC SIGN LETTER CO., 71 N. Clark St., CHICAGO, ILL.

Sell Tobacco and Cigars
Locally or traveling. Salary or commission. Experience unnecessary—we give full instructions. Address MOROTOCK TOBACCO WORKS, Box P 13, DANVILLE, VIRGINIA

$3 a Day Sure Send us your address and we will show you how to make $3 a day absolutely sure; we furnish the work and teach you free, you work in the locality where you live. Send us your address and we will explain the business fully, remember we guarantee a clear profit of $3 for every day's work, absolutely sure. Write at once. ROYAL MANUFACTURING CO., Box 1016 Detroit, Mich.

AGENTS My Sanitary Coffee Maker produces pure, sweet coffee, needs no settler and never wears out. Saves coffee, money and health. Every wife buys at sight, new invention; exclusive territory. Send 15c. for 50c. size, postpaid. DR. LYONS, 157 Day St., Pekin, Ill.

GOLD RINGS FREE Sell 10 packs Prof. Smith's Hair Grower and Dandruff Remedy at 10c each. WE TRUST YOU. When sold send money and we'll send 2 gold laid rings, or choice from our large premium list. An old reliable firm, estab. 13 years. ROSEBUD PERFUME CO., Box 105. Woodsboro, Md.

BIG MONEY FOR AGENTS. Sews leather quick. Makes lock stitch like Sewing machine. Best thing ever invented. Big seller. The Awl For All Sample postpaid $1.00. Agents get money back. Booklet 55 Free. C. A. MYERS CO., 6537 WOODLAWN AVE., CHICAGO, ILL.

$18 to $30 A WEEK SURE Farmers "Ever-Ready" Tool Kit does it. 10 TOOLS IN ONE Agents going wild over results. M. Snyder made $48 in 9 hrs. Joseph Pine took 85 orders in two days. M. D. Finch sold 43 in 9 hrs. Had no experience. You can do it. To show it means a sale. FREE SAMPLE to workers. Foote Mfg. Co., Dept. 802, Dayton, O.

"I MADE $12 PER DAY Selling This 7-Piece Kitchen Set" From sworn statement of H. S. CUNNINGHAM. AGENTS are coining money—selling from 50 to 500 sets per week. You can do it. Send your address today and let us PROVE IT. Experience unnecessary. We show you how to make $3 to $10 a day. OUTFIT FREE to workers. THOMAS MFG. CO. 422 Home Bldg. Dayton, Ohio

You Can Earn $2.00 PER HOUR
No Capital Required We start honest men and women in the Shear and Cutlery business selling U-Clovis Self-Sharpening Shears and Scissors, the greatest invention of the 20th Century. A Fortune Builder for Agents. Agents coining money; even the most experienced in other lines are astonished at the sales and profits. Mr. Lightbody, whose photo is shown above, sold $74.50 worth the first 11½ hours he worked—made $2 per hour. Send for sworn statement. 10-year guarantee to purchaser. Outfit Free. Unoccupied territory going fast. Agents wanted in every locality. Write today. Peoples Supply Co., Dept. 24, Kansas City, Mo.

Tools For A Factory
Given Away
FREE
IF YOU BUY CLOTH FROM US ACCORDING TO OUR SIMPLE EASY PLAN

We make you this exceptional offer because we want to start you in the Canvas Glove Business, show you how to develop it into a hale, hearty business, sell its goods and bring its profit to you; and last, but not least, make one dollar grow rapidly into two.

Never before in history of business has help like this been offered to ambitious men.

Here is brought to your home and placed in your very hands the accumulated wisdom, the priceless experience and proven plans of the glove business. Here is spread before you the vivid drawings and information, the actual working details needed in the glove business.

We are making you this offer, we want you to start a factory, to become prosperous. We want to show you how this can be done on little capital (from $50 to $200) with the possibility of making thousands of dollars.

We do all this for you to start your factory, simply with the understanding that you buy supplies and goods from us so long as our prices are as low or lower than you can get elsewhere.

This is not a speculation in any sense of the word. It is a sound, permanent and highly profitable business. The money to be invested is spent entirely for the necessities of the business; there is no waste material, no dead stock—every yard of cloth can be turned back into cash at a moment's notice.

THE SECRETS OF THE GLOVE BUSINESS

This valuable book contains a great deal of information about the secrets of the glove business and how any one with a capital of from $50 to $250 can make money, right from the start. Send for it right now, today.

We will help you to success, help you in every little detail, help you to succeed.

Don't miss this opportunity even if you have to borrow the money to start with; in three months' time you should pay it back and have money of your own to do business on. You can start a factory in any spare room at home or small store room and enlarge it as the business requires.

Under our new plan we offer to give you free the necessary tools, such as dies, cutting table, maple cutting block, turning machine, cloth rack, raw-hide maul, knife, patterns and equipments. Surely no such liberal offer was ever made. We do this because we want to prove to you that those in the Glove Business are successful and build up a large business. Those who have had the nerve to start and have thrown their brains and energy into the work get along well and have factories in two or three years.

Everybody uses canvas gloves and mittens—the farmer, the mechanic, doctor, lawyer and the merchant in all sections of the country.

Better write us today.

WE WILL SEND FULL INFORMATION

about the business and how we will furnish the free tools and assist you to successfully start a factory. If you would like this information it will cost you only one cent (a postal card) to get it. This is simply an opportunity to go into the manufacturing business, which, with a reasonable amount of work and attention to business, should yield thousands of dollars a year in clean cash profits. We feel confident of your success or we would not furnish you tools free to work with.

We want to start a few of these factories, watch their interests, and give them our valuable assistance. We hope to make our profit from the cloth we sell, and if our prices are not as low or lower than others, we do not even ask you to buy from us. By this arrangement we'll get a small profit and a few people will get a start in a manufacturing business that in time should be a huge manufacturing plant employing many people.

The two brothers of The McCreery Manufacturing Company started only a few years ago absolutely broke, actually borrowed $100.00 to start with. At first only had two girls working and have risen to be worth thousands of dollars, do an enormous business, own their own large factory and have valuable interests in others, all in a remarkably short time. If a factory will do this for us, it will do the same for you. Don't miss this offer. First come, first served. Write today for free book and full information about our free offer.

Write us today, start now, do not let the golden opportunity slip by.

THE McCREERY MANUFACTURING CO., 564 Dorr St., Toledo, O.

WHILE THEY LAST $2.50

45 Cal.

SPRINGFIELD BREECH-LOADING U. S. GOVERNMENT RIFLE DISCONTINUED MODEL

With every order this month A BOX OF CARTRIDGES FREE

COST THE GOV. $18. These are the regular 45-calibre, center-fire, breech-loading U.S. Army rifles in absolutely perfect condition. They are rifles that were held in reserve in the arsenals up to 1903 and were cleaned, oiled and inspected for actual service in that year. Most of them have the Buffington long-range, adjustable sight, fitted with wind gauge. The Hermos Co., 430 Market Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

BOYCE'S EXCHANGE

This catalog of opportunities will interest you. To-day you may find a big bargain or the very chance to make money you have been looking for. "Opportunity knocks once at the door of every man." Yours may be here. Read every ad. carefully.

Advertisements cost $1.00 per line, including one insertion in the BLADE and one in the LEDGER of the following week's issue. No advertisement accepted for insertion in either paper alone. A two-line is the smallest and a twelve-line, the biggest ad. inserted in this department.

BUSINESS CHANCES

I MADE $50,000 in five years in the mail order business; began with $5. Any one can do the work at home in spare time. Send for my free booklet. Tells how to get started. Heacock, Box 729, Lockport, N. Y.

AGENTS

WANTED—Men of good character and ability to sell Fruit Trees, Shrubs, Roses. Steady employment, liberal terms, pay weekly. Thomas Marks & Co., Dept. S. B., Geneva, N.Y.

AGENTS—We have a new patented article that everybody needs; sells for 50c; pays 100 per cent profit; pocket sample; big seller. Write to-day for particulars. C. Ballard Mfg. Co., 134 Summer St., Boston, Mass.

HOUSEHOLD GOODS

EMPIRE LEATHER COUCH ON FREE TRIAL. No money down. Only $19.85 for this $25 couch. We pay the freight. You pay 50 cents a week. Order now. We ship the couch at our expense on 30 days' approval. If you don't like it, ship it back at our expense. Empire Furniture Mfg. Co., Dept. B, Chicago, Ill.

"A YEAR TO PAY," is the Hartman way of selling furniture and household goods. We tell all about our plan, over 22 big stores in catalog No. 62. Sent free to you on request. Hartman Furniture & Carpet Co., 223, 225, 227 and 229 Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

BUY $18.50 RUGS direct from the mill, at the wholesale factory price, $12.50. Save the retailer's profit. 30 days' trial free. Write to-day for colored photographs of our best quality Brussels Rugs in 9x12 size. Daly & Co., Box 137, Philadelphia, Pa.

POST CARDS

10 CENTS WILL PRINT YOUR NAME in my post card paper and you will get post cards from all over. A. D. Kraus, Dept. S., 615 Delaware Ave., Milwaukee, Wis.

OF INTEREST TO WOMEN.

WAIST OR SKIRT FREE—Our letter of full particulars will tell how any woman can get these beautiful garments without cost. No agency scheme. Write to-day for explanation. The Meffer Co., Dept. W., Syracuse, N. Y.

COINS AND STAMPS

I PAY FROM 1 TO 600 for thousands of rare coins, stamps and paper money to 1894. Send stamp for illustrated circular, get posted and make money quickly. Vonbergen, the Coin Dealer, Dept. T, Boston, Mass.

OF INTEREST TO MEN

GUARANTEED HERMOS RAZOR $1.00—We will mail prepaid for $1.00 a razor selected for your beard, one that will fit your face. Razor insurance and guarantee goes with it. Worth $4.00. 30 day's trial. Write to-day. Hermos Co., Dept. B., 430 Market St., Philadelphia, Pa.

OF INTEREST TO WOMEN

OSTRICH FEATHERS at importer's prices. For $1.95 we sell the French Curl Ostrich Plume (17 in. long) for which retailers charge $5.00. Get our price catalog. South African Importing Co., 1301 Wabash Ave., Chicago.

GALL STONE CURE

GALL STONE CURE. Positive, Simple, Harmless and Cheap. Receipt sent for $1.00. E. L. Counts, Coeburn, Va.

HELP WANTED

WANTED—Railway Mail Clerks. Commencement salary $800.00. Many examinations soon. Preparation free. Write immediately. Franklin Institute, Dept. A-48, Rochester, N. Y.

JEWELRY

ELGIN WATCHES ON CREDIT. Get our free catalog. Tells all about our Easy Credit Plan and Free Trial. Send your name and get our big free catalog. Harris-Goar Co., 1251 Grand Ave., Kansas City, Mo.

WANTED—AGENTS

STEADY EMPLOYMENT, men and women, taking orders for fruit and shade trees, plants, etc. Big commissions, payable weekly. No delivering or collecting. Outfit free. Perry Nursery Company, Rochester, New York.

Janet Walters' Trial.

(Continued from page seven.)

seen him transfer from the safe to his pocket when I entered.

"As I turned from the sickening sight of the man I had murdered and robbed, the exertion brought on a severe hemorrhage of the lungs, and in the throes of which I was surprised to see an old college chum and brother in a Greek letter fraternity, standing in the doorway, hatless, with disheveled hair, and staring wildly from me to the man upon the floor. 'For God's sake what have you done, Ned?' he demanded, and when I could speak I told him. I was too weak and ill to care what became of me and I believed myself dying. 'You must get out of this,' he said, and I do not know how he did it, but he picked me up as though I had been a child and carried me out through the door of the bank into the alley. He carried me down the alley a half block and laid me in the shelter of a building. He came back presently with some whisky in a bottle, which partially revived me, and I was able from then on to help myself greatly and get into a carriage which soon drove up. Hastings and I then drove to the railway station, and he left me in the cab while he procured tickets to New York. We boarded the train a half hour later but we did not go to New York, at a little station a hundred miles from here we made our way from the train. He took me to a private house and did everything he could for me, but I was beyond help.

"The time was already approaching in which I should take leave of all things earthly. When I made my full confession to him he made me turn over the money to him, and comforted me by telling me that he would make restitution of it, as soon as it was safe to do so.

"I have been wild, but I am not a thief when I am sober. From certain things which the priest to whom I hand this confession has told me, I fear suspicion has fallen on this more than brother, and I make this confession to vindicate him or whomever shall be suspected of this crime.

"My happiest thoughts in dying are of the hours that Jack Hastings spent with me, waiting upon me, comforting me for my wasted life; in short, performing every service which was possible and bringing to me again the sweetness of that fellowship which existed among us of the Theta Nu Epsilon in the dear dead days when a Greek letter stood for every pleasant association of our college life, the society of the days when I too was happy and befriended."

The vice-president wiped a white mist from his spectacles as he finished the confession.

It now remained to solve the mystery of the confession Simons had obtained from the ex-convict, and as to why Hastings had confessed to a murder, the perpetrator of which could never be made to suffer punishment. He said nothing to the priest of the two confessions in the drawer of his desk, with fine distaste for making any one ridiculous. A few moments later the priest took his departure.

CHAPTER XI.

Janet Walters entered through the heavy doors of the hospital and walked down the long hall, glancing mechanically into the rooms on either side of it, with their white beds and pallid, pain-drawn faces. The odor of ether and other drugs came to her nostrils sickeningly. She was very pale and there were deep blue circles under her violet eyes. The strain of those few days had left their mark upon her and made her older. She would never again be the carefree child who had defied parental authority to meet her lover, and then in a rush of contrition had sent him to confess to that austere man in the little office of the bank.

The days in which she had doubted her lover and vindicated him alternately, as brain or heart ruled her, and that awful day when they telephoned her that Jack had confessed and restored the money to the detectives, had lined her childish face. Mercifully the confession of the real murderer had come soon enough to save her a little, but no one would ever know how she had suffered during that terrible interval.

When he was vindicated she suffered almost as much over her doubt of him as she had over his guilt. She was wild to see him, to cry out to him her plea for forgiveness, but he had hovered between life and death at the hospital, unconscious and helpless. He was still delirious, but she was to be permitted to see him, and hoped filled her heart as she followed the attendant to the little private room where her lover lay.

"Is he conscious?" she asked in a whisper, hoping against hope, but hope was denied.

"He is still delirous," the attendant answered, "and has been ever since they brought him here. The physicians say that he walked the streets for days with a fever that probably raged above a hundred. They say they never saw such nerve!"

The attendant threw the door open just then, and the girl half-groped her way to the bed where the form of her lover lay stretched on the white bed. She saw the ravages that those days had made in his face, the caverns hollowed out by sleeplessness and fever for the eyes. She flung herself upon her knees beside him.

"Jack—Jack!" she whispered. "Darling Jack!" The blue-lidded eyes were closed and the soft hair was rumpled on the white brow. He lay as though asleep. Her voice seemed to arouse him slightly. He started up from the pillow, looking wildly about, stared at her with unseeing eyes, while the purple fever-flush deepened in his cheeks.

"Janet—Janie!" he shrieked, mingling her name with love words. Then a sob shook his body. "I didn't do it, Janie," he cried wildly. "Indeed I didn't. I almost did, and then I didn't."

He half raised his body, frightening the girl. "You don't believe me, Janie. You don't! You don't!" The voice rose to a delirious scream, and the girl cowered there terrified.

"Oh, don't talk like that, Jack!" she pleaded. He had fallen back on his pillow now so lifelessly that in her over-wrought state of mind she feared he was dead.

"Jack—Jack—speak to me!" she sobbed. "I'm Janie. Don't die—I'm sorry! Do you hear me? I'm sorry!" She finished weeping bitterly.

Out in the shadows of delirium her voice reached him, the voice of his love. He lifted his head, staring into her face with eyes that did not see at first, then surely there was recognition in them! He seemed to struggle with that enemy delirium. Then calmness came. "Janie," he whispered, "Janie!"

Just then the attendant approached the bed, where those two clasped hands, and saw that he was conscious. Very firmly and yet very gently she led the girl out of the room.

CHAPTER XII.

"Auto-suggestion certainly figures in the confession of Jack Hastings," Professor Philton was saying to Simons with his delight of technical phrases. "I do not think that the boy was delirious at the time he made the confession, but he was bordering so closely upon it that, when he saw before him, as he supposed, the dead body of the deceased banker, he was too weak from fever and loss of sleep to combat the suggestion that he committed the deed, which existed in the minds of Murdock and Aimes. The sight of that loathsome corpse produced an emotional shock in his fever-weakened brain which upset all the normal connections of thought, forming a new personality, which even we scientists find hard to distinguish from the real self. The victim of this peculiar psychological condition was now ready to receive and put in words the suggestions which were transmitted directly from the minds of the detectives to his."

The professor seemed very pleased with this learned elucidation of a scientific fact.

"Plain delirium—that's what I call it," Simons said crossly, thereby hurting the professor's tender feelings more than he knew. Simons' failure in the late case had been a severe blow, and he was not yet disposed to do much but quarrel.

"I'm an ass, Philton," he said presently, "an ass! I had all the clews necessary to the correct deduction, and I failed to make it. I'd better go back to reporting. I'll never make a detective in this world. The only comfort I find in the whole infernal affair is that, at least, I had sense enough to see that Hastings didn't do it from the first. I put his running away down to fear, at first, and then when he resolutely refused to divulge where he had been between the night of the murder and the time he came back I put it down to some youthful indiscretion, an affair with a woman or something of that sort. It should have been just as easy to make the deduction that he was protecting some one.

"I interpreted every clew I found as foolishly as Murdock and Aimes might have done, if they'd had sense enough to discover the clews themselves, giving them the most apparent explanation. When I found the convict's parole near the door of the bank it sent me looking for Jim Arnold. When I found that there had been robbery, it confirmed me more than ever in my belief that Jim was guilty. Then when I discovered that the blood in the cuspidor came from a hemorrhage of the lungs, instead of from that hole in the banker's head, which lay, crushed up against the cuspidor, and ascertained that the janitor had cleaned the cuspidor before leaving that night, and that Walters was not tubercular, while Arnold was, it put me clean off. The rest of those muts just took it that the blood came from the wound without considering that there would be almost no hemorrhage at all from such a blow or where death resulted so instantaneously.

"Hastings was not tubercular—that I ascertained positively—hence, some one else must have been present that evening after the janitor left, besides Hastings and the banker, why might he not be the murderer?

"Then I found another seal than the one with which the banker was killed lying on the hatrack, an unusual place, you will admit, for a seal, and in all probability laid there hurriedly. Jack Hastings had been hatless when Father Murphy met him, and it was a very natural conclusion that when he returned to the bank for his hat he dropped the seal on the hatrack. Far-fetched perhaps, but I was sure of his innocence after the first interview I had with him. If this were true he was not carrying the seal with which the banker had been killed.

"I thought it was pretty cute of me to use Murdock's stiff to get Arnold's confession, after I heard them planning to use it to convict Hastings. How could I know when Jim Arnold collapsed at the sight of the corpse and confessed to the murder of one he called in vernacular the 'banker' that he was confessing to the murder of the unknown dead fished out of the river that day, taken to a morgue and from there loaned to Murdock? 'I robbed and murdered the banker,' he said, and while I should have made him elaborate upon his confession, he was so weak that I was glad to have him write that much and sign it.

"You see, Arnold recognized the dead man by his clothes, and then a confession was about all there was left him, believing, as he did, that I knew all the details. He refused to divulge anything at all in regard to the money that he took from the dead man's body. Of course, it didn't occur to me that the disappearance of the little Jew in the slums was the crime that Arnold was responsible for, and, of course, I couldn't know that he was called the 'banker' in the under-world.

"Poor Arnold will never be punished in this world for his crime. They telephoned me from the hospital tonight that he was dying. I wonder what kind of a future there can be for a man who'll slug a fellow man for a paltry hundred dollars and throw his body in the river? Queer how things work out sometimes! If Jim Arnold hadn't lost his parole that night near the bank door, where the other murder was committed, his real crime would never have been discovered, and I'd have been spared making such a laughing stock of myself."

"Don't take it so hard, Simons," the professor said kindly. "You were deceived as any one would have been. One thing I'm glad of is that that boy Hastings is clear of suspicion. They can say what they will about his father—the boy's made of the right stuff! When I think of all the risk he took for the sake of 'a little Greek letter' and all that it means in brotherliness—well, I choke up. That little letter came mighty near sending a mighty fine lad to the gallows. Have you heard how he is?"

"Convalescing nicely," Simons answered with sudden softness in his voice. "I shouldn't wonder if you'd hear of a quiet wedding on the hill in a few months. The secret has been confided to one or two and through them to the rest of us."

The end.

The Sea Kidnapers.

(Continued from page five.)

"I suppose," interrupted Ziol, "that I am on board the Red Rover partly as lady's companion and partly because I speak Spanish. If so, I am lost to the world. This poor creature seems to know no Spanish. Mr. Volway, has not the time come when your peculiar reserve can be laid aside? Did you expect that, like nearly all other natives of these islands, this girl would be a Spaniard by speech, if not by birth? Is that why I am here?"

"Lorrington put you here," returned Richard doggedly. "I surely had nothing to do with it. As for myself, I am not a linguist. The situation is embarrassing."

"Perche non rispondete," said the captive.

Now, she was trying to express herself in Italian, but doing it slowly, awkwardly, laboriously, as a beginner will. It was lost effort. None of the party knew what tongue they heard.

She looked upon their blank faces, and then her temper waxed warm again. Hands and face got in motion, and she sent forth a deluge of words—angry, bitter, vehement words. She looked as if she wished them daggers, and seemed perfectly capable of sending the blade home if she had it.

Captain Gord Rockett wiped his perspiring face and swore unreservedly. It bade fair to be a very entertaining voyage from that time on, but not in a style to suit his taste. A cantankerous woman in the cabin was something better left ashore.

Her behavior in their presence had been very mild compared with what she had done before their coming. Checked for a while, she now gave way wholly to this passion. And her rage took practical form. Before her purpose was suspected, she made a rush for Rockett, her fingers outstretched and plainly intended for his walnut-like face. Startled, he tried to retreat backward and with such ill luck that he tumbled and fell flat on his back.

The avenger was on his track, and the pirate roared in alarm but Golfo had returned on the heels of his superiors, and he grappled with the enraged beauty. If she represented high rank among her own people she had none of the reserve pride that tempers the Anglo-Saxon, and she forthwith began to scratch the negro, the most inoffensive man in the ship.

Gord Rockett came up saying intemperate things, and he went speedily to the aid of the cook. Between them they held the refractory hands, though both received a liberal supply of kicks that made their shins feel like concentrated pangs of the universe.

"Get her into that stateroom, and lock the door on her!" roared the captain. "Do it quick, or we are dead men!"

To Ziol the struggle was unseemly and lamentable. She flashed a glance at Volway, and what she read there gave her a little better opinion of him. But neither spoke, and the luckless captive, still resisting, was thrust into the room.

Really, no harm had been done her, while her opponents had marks from her nails they would carry many a day.

With the door closed on her she was heard to beat upon it, but that was all. She was not the kind to weep.

"A tigress got loose among us!" groaned Rockett in miserable mood.

Just then a sailor came rushing down the companionway.

"Captain!" he cried, "the lights of a vessel are bearin' down on us, and the mate thinks it's a man-o'-war——"

The speaker stopped short. A tremendous crash, like that of a fallen spar, sounded above, and the boom of a cannon came on its heels.

"Them infernal privateers again!" cried Rockett.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ENEMY SHOWS HIS TEETH.

The alarm of the sailor, the crash and the boom of the cannon fell upon Richard's ears less acutely than on those of his companion's. His attention had been diverted. Despite the temper the captive showed, he had been in keen sympathy with her. Kidnaped, she was a young stranger among foes, exposed to she know not what.

Pitying her, he was disgusted with the force exerted against her, and he turned away to witness no more of it. Something else suddenly met his attention. Jeremy Reith was at the cabin entrance. More than that, Jeremy, who had been so happy-go-lucky before the abduction was broached and so silent and retiring since, was apparently restored to his old high spirits.

Watching proceedings, he had an expansive smile that indicated strong amusement and much satisfaction. The smile was kin to hilarity, and Jeremy was himself again. But, seeing that he was under survey, he abruptly grew solemn.

The smile faded and he looked unnaturally serious.

A wave of suspicion rolled over Richard. Dislike for Jeremy grew to be distrust. Had the man a personal interest in recent events? Was he opposed to the abduction? Was he mixed up with the affairs of the island people?

Thus far Richard had considered when the sailor came rushing with the alarm. Then, other matters became more pressing. With the Red Rover under fire, the safety of the brig and her people became the chief consideration.

Captain Gord Rockett lost no time. Adding a few words that were as strong as the situation demanded, he rushed up the companionway. Reith followed, and Richard trailed after.

The Red Rover was bowling along with a fine breeze on the starboard quarter. She was already under a press of canvas, but the mate had sent the crew aloft to add thereto. Except for the binnacle light, the deck was in darkness, and, as the night was cloudy, the course was through a black expanse.

Rockett took in everything at almost a glance, even to the group of lights that showed astern. The enemy was there, and just near enough to make matters problematical.

"Mr. Sawlton, what do you know?" asked the captain sententiously.

"Not much, sir. A bank of fog shut us in for ten minutes. When it passed the man-o'-war was there. He tried a gun, and he brought the spar down. It won't hurt."

"Must have been a lucky shot for him."

"It was. No human being could be sure in this night, even if he sighted the gun ever so careful."

"Lucky, but it may happen again. She's rather close aboard us. Should you say she was the same privateer, or one o' them, that worried us afore?"

The mate bit off a friendly morsel of tobacco.

"I'm thinking!" he then replied, "she's astern. May be a ship that has been lying off and on, but it seems a bit suspicious that she is right at our heels."

"In plain words, you think the Porto Rico folks have sent a ready man-o'-war after us, eh?"

"Well, sir, as to that, I'm wondering."

"Anyhow, it's a chase. What's your orders to sail?"

"My idea has been to give her all she'll [illegible]"

"Crack her, Mr. Sawlton! Give her all she can stagger under! We have no big gun to reply to their——"

There was a flash near the group of lights, a boom, and a cannon ball fell well to the leeward.

"A hundred fathoms short!" growled Rockett derisively. "It won't do no worse than to make a fish seasick. Still, the third one may be another lucky strike. Drat them privateers!"

The skipper walked to the binnacle light and stood gazing at the card. He studied [illegible] then turned about.

"Keep her so, Stone. Aha! we [illegible] a smother along our keel! [illegible] to it, but she will carry her [illegible]. As long as she cracks she holds."

The sailors were coming down the shrouds and all presently stood on deck awaiting further orders, but there was no more to do. [illegible] The brig was clad, and she plunged [illegible] into the sea like a bloodhound on [illegible] and the white-capped wash went [illegible] astern as if frightened. Rockett laughed and slapped the mate on the shoulder with unusual familiarity.

"She's a shootin' star, an' it does my heart good to see her fly. What's your idee o' her, bullies?"

The crew, thus called upon, joined in a verdict of admiration, and Loats added that she could outsail anything afloat.

"We can think of that when we have shaken off the privateer," suggested Sawlton. "There is speed back there, too. She's a bird. Yes, [illegible] in easy range if she sees fit to keep it up. A chance shot may hull us——"

"Stow that!" interrupted Rockett. "For one, I like this. Reminds me of old times when the Spanish Main wasn't a Sunday School. Why, I was afloat in the days when—but never mind!"

Some of the sailors grinned. Whatever the skipper's earlier life had been, he was proud of it, but clearly felt that it was not a subject for safe discussion. His half-made confessions were always humorous to his hearers.

When another shot was expected from the pursuer it did not come, and the opinion became prevalent that the stranger was trusting to his sailing powers. Matters settled into the semi-quiet of an orthodox chase, and the men of the Red Rover lounged about as if nothing uncommon was afoot. Jeremy had disappeared.

Richard had gone apart from the others when he suddenly found Daniel Grief by his side.

"If I was you, sir," said the sailor, "I'd keep an eye open!"

"Why so?" asked Richard.

"Well, Mr. Volway, I can't make you see it in a few words, maybe, but there was somethin' queer in the boat when we were leavin' land. I was pullin' the after starboard oar, ye know, an' Sam Bigler was right back o' you. He was supposed to be pullin' for all he could muster, but I see him slip one hand loose an' make a motion like as if he drawed a knife. Then he raised that same hand, an' the idee came to me that he was goin' to stab you in the back. Just then, however, the shot came that killed Don Tomaso, an' he pitched out an' nearly bumped Sam's oar from his grasp. I forgot the knife, then, but I tell you I think Sam intended to drive it into you."

Richard had listened with keen attention. He had not forgotten that his life was attempted on board the brig earlier in the voyage, and by means of a knife. Knowing he had a secret, bitter foe in the ship, he

(Continued on page fifteen.)

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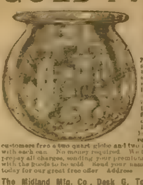

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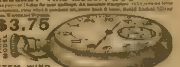

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A Plot That Failed;

Or, Two Boys' Strange Adventures

By Thomas P. Montfort

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CHAPTER XVI.

A DESPERATE CHANCE.

THE man turned slowly and walked away in the direction Rosell indicated. It was with the most serious reluctance he did so, but there was nothing else for it.

To be marched along at the muzzle of a gun is not a pleasant thing under any circumstances, but it is a great deal less pleasant when the man who holds the gun is crazy.

There is never any telling what a man like that is liable to do. He may be fully decided at one moment to do one thing, and the next instant his mind may switch around giving him the idea that he should do something just the opposite.

The prisoner realized all this, and it caused him to feel pretty nervous. He did not know what moment Rosell might conclude that it would be best to shoot, and the more he dwelt on this idea the more nervous he became.

He walked some distance in silence, then, unable to restrain his anxiety longer, he turned to Joe and said:

"Have you any influence over this man?"

Joe and Leo had followed the other two back toward the cabin.

"I don't know," Joe answered. "Why?"

"Well, if you have, I wish you would instill it into his mind that he must not kill me."

"I guess he doesn't intend to kill you."

"How do you know he don't?"

"He said he was going to take you to Minerva and let her decide what to do with you."

"I know."

"Then, what are you fretting about?"

"You know he's as crazy as a bedbug."

"Yes."

"And he is apt to take a notion at any moment to plug me."

"That's true. But that is one of the chances you take in your business."

"But you can help me."

"I guess not."

"You don't want to."

"No, I don't."

"You are surely heartless."

"No, only cautions. I'd rather see you killed any day than to be killed myself. I guess I'm a little selfish, too."

"Then you won't do a thing for me?"

"Not a thing."

"All right, that settles it. And now let me tell you something. If I ever get out of this scrape, and run across you again, I'll shoot your hide so full of holes that it won't hold shucks. I'll shoot you, and shoot you, and in such a way that you'll live till I've riddled you into mince meat. And I'll find you, too, if I have to tramp these mountains for ten years hunting you."

"Provided you get away."

"Yes."

"Which seems rather doubtful, don't it?"

"More doubtful things than that have happened before now."

"Yes, and more unexpected."

"Meaning what?"

"You know, I guess."

"Yes, and if it hadn't been for this lunatic you'd be——"

"If I were you I wouldn't say that."

"Why?"

"He can understand you all right, and he might resent being called that. He may be a little sensitive, you see. You notice how he holds the pistol—pointed right at your back—with his finger on the trigger. It would be such an easy little matter to shoot. Just like drawing a breath. I believe if I was in his place I couldn't resist the temptation, and I wonder that he can. I don't think it would take much to decide him that way."

The man shrugged his shoulders, but made no reply. Suddenly a little light showed on the shadow of his face. They were nearing a stream that rolled and tumbled and sprawled as it dashed and tore down its rough, rocky course. Between them and the river was a precipice which fell down two or three hundred feet, along the face of which grew scattering pine trees that seemed to have their footing in solid stone.

"A man in a desperate situation," the prisoner observed, "can afford to take some desperate chances. In my case, now, I couldn't make it much worse, could I?"

"I suppose not."

"So I can afford to take long chances, can't I?"

"Perhaps. I don't see, though, what you are driving at."

"Don't you?"

"No."

"Well, I mean in an effort to get away. If I saw any kind of a chance to get away, no matter how desperate it might be, I'd be justified in trying, don't you think?"

"I suppose so."

"And I'd be a fool if I didn't, eh?"

"Perhaps. But I don't see where you are going to find even that sort of a chance."

"You don't?"

"No."

"Then, I'll show you."

They had reached the very edge of the precipice, and as the prisoner spoke he whirled quickly toward it, and the next instant had leaped out and went crashing down toward the river, through trees and among boulders, every foot of his way fraught with death and destruction.

CHAPTER XVII.

JOE AND LEO ARE LOST.

The boys and Rosell stood for a moment, rooted to the ground in helpless amazement, then the latter recovered his senses and fired shot after shot at the falling man. Whether any of the shots took effect or not they could not tell, but certain it was that none of them proved fatal.

They could see him grasping at the trees and rocks to check his fall, and at times he hung to limbs and swayed for a moment in the air with the river far below him. Then losing his hold he dropped through space only to grasp the next object that came in his way.

"He'll never escape," Joe muttered. "He'll be killed when he reaches the bottom, if not before then."

"I won't take any chances," Rosell replied, as he peppered away with his pistol. "But it's queer I can't hit him."

At last they saw him strike the water, and for a minute he was seemingly inanimate as he floated swiftly with the current.

"There, I guess he's done for," Joe said drawing a deep breath of relief.

Rosell said nothing, but he waited and watched expectantly.

Then all at once they saw the man become active, and a little later he had struggled to the shore. Rosell opened fire on him again, but he did not appear to be greatly disturbed. He looked up to where they stood, waved his hand at them jauntily, then disappeared among the trees and rocks.

With a cry of baffled rage Rosell ran a little way down the cliff and disappeared over the edge. The boys ran after him, but when they came to where he had started down they stopped.

He was going down in a way but little less perilous than the way the other had gone. It is true his place of descent was not quite so steep, and trees and boulders were more numerous, but it was a place for all that that afforded not more than one chance out of a thousand for a man to descend it and escape alive.

Joe and Leo both called to him and begged him to come back, but he gave them no heed. He did not seem to hear Joe at all, but at the sound of Leo's voice he looked quickly up for an instant, and his brow was puckered, and there was a look of doubt and uncertainty on his face. It was the same expression that Joe had noticed there the day before, when the old man had stood for a moment in the cabin door.

They waited breathlessly, watching Rosell's descent, and at last, to their surprise, they saw him land safely at the bottom. He did not hesitate, but at once crossed the stream, by jumping from boulder to boulder, and disappeared in the direction the other had gone.

The boys continued for some time to gaze down at the river, then simultaneously they raised their heads, and their eyes met.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" Joe exclaimed.

"Beats the nation, don't it?" Leo said.

"Beats all the nations and the rest of the world thrown in. How in the dickens they ever went down there, and came out alive, is more than I can understand."

"And not even hurt."

"No. Sound as a dollar, both of them."

"It puzzles me, sure."

"It would puzzle a wooden man."

"Where do you reckon they'll go?"

"There's no telling. That villain will try to get away and Rosell will try to find him and kill him."

"And there is no telling how far Rosell will follow him."

"Not a bit."

"And do you suppose he will ever find his way back?"

"I don't know."

"It will be tough on Minerva if he never does."

"I was just thinking of that."

"I wonder if we hadn't better try to follow and get him back."

"No use."

"Why?"

"Well, if we got down there alive we wouldn't have the least idea which way to go."

"That's so."

"And even if we found him, which there wouldn't be one chance in a thousand of us doing, we wouldn't be able to do a thing with him."

"No."

"So it would be pure folly for us to try to follow."

"I see."

There was a long pause, then Joe said thoughtfully:

"We have certainly hit some exciting and stirring times up here."

"Yes, for boys like us," Leo answered.

"I tell you what," Joe said, "if Rosell hadn't fired that shot up there just when he did, we wouldn't be alive now."

"No. That was a pretty close call wasn't it, Joe?"

"I should say so."

"I wasn't scared then, but it makes me tremble now when I think of it. It was awful."

"And the villain was so cool and heartless about it."

"Didn't seem to think any more of it than he would the shooting of a couple of dogs."

"Not a bit."

"He is surely a villain of the worst kind."

"A cold-blooded murderer. But what do you think about what he said?"

"What was it?"

"Why, about your cousin wanting you out of the way, and hiring those men to kill you, and all that?"

"I don't know. What do you think?"

"It is my opinion that he spoke the truth, and that your cousin is just what that man said he is."

"Do you really reckon so?"

"I haven't a doubt of it."

"That seems pretty hard to believe, Joe."

"Not for me, in the face of all we know."

"But it don't seem possible that anybody could be so wicked and cruel."

"It does seem hard to believe."

"It's perfectly fiendish."

"It is, Leo."

"And nobody but a devil would do such a thing."

"That's true. But, say, do you know it is getting late, and that we would better not stand here any longer?"

"What do you propose to do?"

"I think we had better go back to the cabin and tell Minerva about her father. She will be anxious."

"She is there all alone, too."

"No she's not. There is that other man."

"That's so."

"And we don't know who or what he is, either."

"Do you think he would mistreat her?"

"I don't know. He's a stranger, and I know she should not be alone there with him."

"Then let's go."

"Yes, and we'd better hurry. It is a good ways and the sun is going behind the mountains. It will soon be getting dark."

They started on and for a little distance followed along the edge of the precipice. Then the river made a sudden turn, and they kept straight on through the woods. For half an hour they continued on, sure that they were on the right course.

"We came north on our way over here," Joe said, "so we must keep going south to get back."

"Certainly. That stands to reason," Leo replied. "We'll make it all right, but I hate to go back and leave Rosell out here."

"So do I, but it can't be helped. I hope, though, he'll turn up at the cabin."

Presently, the sun dipped behind the

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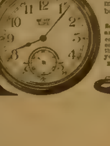


mountain, and in an incredibly short time it began to grow dark. A few minutes later Joe, who was leading the way, came to a halt. He stood for a little as if undecided, then he said:

"Leo, do you know what has happened to us?"

"No," Leo replied. What?"

"We are lost."

"Lost?"

"Yes, lost."

CHAPTER XVIII.

CUPID'S APPEARANCE.

The boys stood for some time looking into each others eyes, and by degrees it dawned on them what the full meaning of their situation was. Their faces paled and their hearts quaked.

"Lost!" Joe repeated.

"Lost!" Leo echoed.

The night had settled down and the darkness was already growing thick.

"What shall we do?" Leo asked.

"I don't know," Joe replied.

"Don't you suppose we could find the way to the cabin if we went on?"

"If we knew the direction to go, we might."

"Why, straight ahead, of course."

"Can you tell which is straight ahead?"

"The way we were going when we stopped."

"But we were going wrong then."

"How do you know?"

"Can't you see?"

"No."

"Well, if you had observed as you came along you would know that we passed this spot a few minutes ago."

"We did?"

"We certainly did."

"Humph! So we are going back toward the precipice?"

"Well, we are surely not going toward the cabin."

"And you don't know in what direction the cabin is?"

"No."

"Have you no idea?"

"Not the least."

"Then we are lost, sure enough."

"We are."

A long silence followed, during which the boys were very thoughtful. Finally Leo spoke.

"Joe," he said, "it looks to me like we are in a pretty bad mess."

"I guess you see it about right, Leo," Joe answered.

"We are elected to spend this night in the woods, anyhow; and maybe this is not all."

"We'll have to spend tonight here, sure, but I hope we'll be all right when morning comes. We can get our course then."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Why can't we, with the sun to guide us?"

"If we had the sun to guide us."

"Well, won't we?"

"I am afraid not."

"Why?"

"Well, if you will notice, you will see that it is solidly clouded."

"By George, it is. I had not thought of that. But it may be clear enough in the morning."

"It may. On the other hand it may not."

"If it is we can soon find our way to the cabin."

"But if it isn't?"

"I don't know what, then."

"It will look as though we are in a bad predicament sure enough, won't it?"

"It will necessitate our waiting here until it clears up."

"And suppose that should be days, or even a week?"

"Oh, I hope it won't be that bad."

"But it is liable to be."

"Yes, I suppose it is."

"And in that case what are we to do?"

"I don't know. We won't worry about that, though, till it happens."

"But it is a serious matter."

"Yes, if it comes to that. We have enough present troubles to occupy our attention, though, without going ahead and borrowing some from the future. We have got to spend tonight here, at least."

"Yes, but that is not a very serious matter."

"That depends."

"On what?"

"Well, on how we get through."

"I don't understand."

"Don't you?"

"No."

"Then I'll try to explain. You know we are completely unarmed?"

"Yes."

"And I suppose you are aware of the fact that the mountains are full of wild animals?"

"Yes."

"Then suppose some of those animals should happen along this way and decide to pay us attentions?"

"Do you think they are any animals here that would attack us?"

"I guess it is more than likely—bears and things like that."

"Well, they'd certainly have the advantage of us, wouldn't they?"

"Decidedly. But that is not all."

"No?"

"That man, our enemy, is no doubt still alive and abroad in the woods."

"If Rosell hasn't killed him."

"Which, I am afraid, he hasn't."

"What about him?"

"Nothing, only he might wander back this way and accidentally stumble on us."

"Which would mean the end for us."

"It certainly would."

"But I guess the chances of that are few and far between."

"I hope so, but we can't tell. I am prepared to expect anything now. Out in this country all sorts of things are liable to happen, it seems."

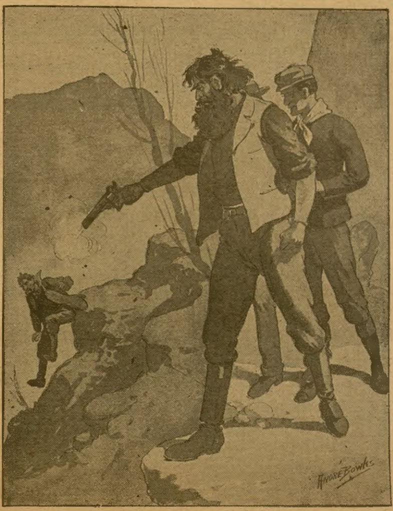
"They have certainly happened to us thick and fast, haven't they?"

"Surely."

"And the most improbable things, too."

"I should think so."

"Let's see, now, what all has happened to us in forty-eight hours. On the point of being murdered, an earthquake shakes us down into a canyon where we miraculously escape destruction; are held up by a crazy man who threatens to shoot us, rescued by a girl, discover a gold mine, left in the mine to perish, rescued by a stranger, kidnaped by another stranger who is on the point of shooting us, rescued by the crazy man and, last, lost in the mountains. We have been going some, sure, haven't we?"



Rossel peppered away with his pistol.

"Pretty well for a beginning. I guess if we remained out awhile we'd drift into real exciting times by and by."

"I wouldn't be surprised. Probably there would be enough happening to sort of keep us awake, anyhow."

"I rather think so."

The boys lay down to rest, but they had decided that it would not be safe to fall asleep. It would also be worse than folly to make any attempt to go further that night. There was not one chance in a thousand that they could find the cabin, and on the other hand they were almost sure to lose their course.

So they decided to remain awake and wait where they were for the dawn of day.

"I would give a good deal," Joe remarked, "to know how it is with Minerva."

There was something in his tone that caused Leo to look quickly up.

"Joe," he said, "I believe I have made an important discovery."

"What is it?"

"I may be mistaken, but I think you are in love."

Joe hesitated a moment, then said boldly:

"I am."

Leo reached out and took Joe's hand and pressed it warmly.

"I don't know why I should feel so," he said, "but somehow I am awful glad to hear you say that. For some reason it seems to bring us nearer together, and make you more to me than a friend. Strange, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is. I feel the same way toward you."

"Can you account for it?"

"No. At least not certainly."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MAN IN THE NIGHT.

The hours dragged wearily and slowly enough, and in spite of all their efforts the boys found it almost impossible to remain awake. They had passed a busy day and they were exhausted.

"I think," Joe said, "that it would be better for us to sleep a little, taking turn about at it. One can keep watch as well as both."

"I wish we could arrange it some way," Leo answered, "for I can hardly keep my eyes open."

"Then you go to sleep and I'll keep the first watch," Joe proposed.

"And you'll call me at midnight so I can watch while you sleep?"

"I'll call you when my time comes."

"All right."

In less than two minutes Leo was sleeping soundly, unmindful of all his troubles. Joe sat still for a few minutes, then, feeling the numbness of sleep stealing over him, arose and began to pace to and fro.

And as Joe walked he fell to thinking over all that had transpired within the last two days, and began to put things together and form a probable conclusion.

"It don't seem hardly possible," he told himself at last, "that things could drift around in such a way, but, for all that, I believe Leo is Rosell's lost son. I am firmly convinced of it, but I will not hint at such a thing to Leo until I am sure I am right."

Then he fell to wondering how it would be possible to learn the truth, and after a long siege of thought, shook his head slowly.

"I don't see how I can do a thing," he was forced to admit. "There is nothing to work from."

Several hours had passed, and Joe was sitting quietly beside Leo. It was past midnight, but Leo was sleeping so soundly and peaceably that Joe decided not to wake him. In fact, he had never intended to wake him from the first.

But Joe was very sleepy, and all about a stillness that was oppressive reigned. In spite of all his efforts to prevent it, his eyes closed, and he fell into a doze.

He must have been unconscious only for a moment, if he was entirely unconscious at all, then his eyes flew open, and, with a suppressed cry, he started up and sat gazing into the darkness listening intently.

The stillness of the night had been broken by a cry, which to Joe, more than half asleep, sounded wild and weird and far away. His first thought was of wild animals and his next was of the man who had attempted to kill them.

He listened a long time, but the cry was not repeated, and after awhile he decided that he had not heard anything at all, and that he must have been dreaming.

He was beginning to doze when again he was brought up wide awake. This time he knew he had not dreamed. Just below him, and not twenty steps distant, something was moving through the trees. He could distinctly hear the rustling of the bushes, and the fall of feet on the dead leaves. It was an animal of some kind, but the darkness was so thick, that, strain his eyes as he would, he could catch not so much as a glimpse of it.

He waited breathlessly, hoping that whatever the thing might be it would not discover his presence, but would pass on. Still, he was anxious to know what it was, and whether it was man or beast.

On this latter point he did not have to wait long for enlightenment, for presently there was a scuffling sound, as though the thing had made a misstep and stumbled,

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and the next moment a series of low, muttered oaths followed.

The thing was a man.

For an instant Joe's heart bounded with relief, and even hope, but it was only for an instant. He quickly remembered who the man surely was, and he realized that for once it would be far better to be at the mercy of any wild beast that flourished in the mountains.

At first he could not tell whether or not the man was coming toward him, but at last he decided that he was not. Then he breathed easier. But it was not for long.

Presently the footsteps ceased, and all was silent. The man had stopped. He was only a few feet away, and in the awful stillness Joe felt sure something would happen to betray him. If he should unavoidably make even the slightest noise, or if Leo should stir, or even snore, they would be lost. He could not see the man, but he could easily picture him standing in a listening attitude, his ears strained to catch the slightest sound.

"And it would take so little to betray us," he thought. "Oh, if it would only go on."

Then Joe wondered if the man had traced them in some way and knew they were there. Such a thing seemed hardly possible, yet why did he remain so long in one place? What was he waiting for?

Then another thought, not less disquieting than the others, came up. If the man had traced them and knew they were somewhere thereabouts, wasn't it possible he would wait there until morning? This thought made Joe tremble, for he realized only too well what it would mean. There would be no escape for him and Leo.

Minute after minute passed, and to Joe each of them seemed an age. The longer he waited the more firmly convinced he became that his last surmise was correct. The man was surely waiting for the dawn of the new day. He became nervous, and his heart throbbed violently, but he set his teeth firmly together and sat motionless, waiting, waiting, waiting.

He wondered if there was anything he could do to elude the other's grasp. It occurred to him that he might, by being very cautious, steal away in the darkness. The chance of getting away undetected would, he knew, be very slim, but still it would be a chance, while to remain there was almost sure death. Under the circumstances it was a chance he could well afford to take, and for an instant he was inclined to do it.

Then he remembered Leo, and his inclination vanished. Leo was soundly sleeping, and it would be impossible to get him away without waking him, and there would not be one chance in a thousand of getting him awake without noise.

No, it would be impossible to get Leo away, and it was certain that he would not go without him. Whatever came he would never forsake his companion and friend.

After what Joe conservatively estimated to have been two hours, but which in reality was less than ten minutes, the fall of the footsteps among the leaves was heard again, and also the rustling of the bushes. Joe breathed a sigh of relief and then listened eagerly to discover the direction the man was taking. A moment passed and his heart sank, and his feeling of relief vanished.

The footsteps were drawing closer to him.

"It is all up now," he thought, "and we are certainly lost."

He felt about him and at last found a loose stone. He took it in his hand and held it ready for instant use.

"It is not much of a weapon," he thought, "but it is better than none. If the worst comes to the worst, I will do the best I can with it. If we are discovered I'll put up all the fight I am able.

The steps came on until Joe could hear the man breathe. He could not see him yet, but he knew he must be very close. He was sure there could not be more than five or six feet between them.

"If he only misses us and does not stop," Joe mused, "we may escape. But if he stops we are discovered."

He raised the rock and held it poised.

"The moment that I see that we are discovered," he added, "I'll let drive with this, and I'll crush his head if I can."

The footsteps veered a little to the right, and Joe knew that they would pass him, but they would miss him only by a yard.

"It will be a close shave," he told himself, "but it may be all right if he only doesn't stop. But if he stops—well, I will only have to do the best I can. There is not much to hope for, but still there's a bare chance."

A moment passed, and then Joe drew himself up into a tense position and waited breathlessly, with his poor weapon of defense raised ready to hurl.

The sound of the footsteps had ceased and all was still. At little more than arm's length from him the man had stopped.

CHAPTER XX.

A DILEMMA.

For a full minute Joe suffered the keenest torture of suspense, then he was able to draw another breath of relief.

The man had walked on.

Joe did not stir or move, even so much as to lift a finger, until the footsteps had grown faint in the distance. Then he became conscious that beads of cold sweat stood out on his forehead, and he raised his hand to wipe them away. He was shaking like a leaf, too, and his heart thumped and his temples throbbed.

He was not scared, he had not felt afraid during the whole time, but his nerves had been keyed up to a pitch that was excruciatingly painful. He was not a coward, and he could have faced open danger without fear, but the terribleness of suspense was too much for him.

He listened until the footsteps had died away in the distance, then he started to awaken Leo with the idea of getting away from that spot. But on second thought he changed his mind and decided to let Leo sleep on.

"One place," he thought, "is as safe as another. If that man is searching the woods for us, he is not likely to go over the same ground twice, and besides if we tried to get away we might run right into his arms. I guess we may just as well stay right here until morning."

Joe did not doze any more that night, but through the three or four hours of darkness that remained, he was very wide awake and alert.

He fell to wondering how the man had come so near locating them, and how, even, he had known that they were in the woods. That he did not know it was not to be doubted, otherwise why would he be searching the mountains at that time of night. Yet how he knew was a mystery.

"Oh, well," he thought, "this whole thing is a series of mysteries and surprises, so there is no reason to be astonished at anything. I guess, if this thing keeps up a few more days, I won't feel surprised if the sun and the moon and the stars all disappear for good. I think I'll rather more likely be astonished if ten hours passes without some almost impossible thing happening."

Then he thought of Rosell and wondered what had become of him. Evidently he had not succeeded in overtaking his prisoner, since the man was still at large, or at least he had not settled his account with him for so unceremoniously leaving him.

"Ah! Suppose he had overtaken him and that the tables had been turned. Suppose Rosell had been killed and was lying somewhere now stark and cold! Well, in his condition it would probably be as well.

But then, there was Minerva. In spite of all, she dearly loved her father, and his death would be a terrible blow to her, and it would grieve her sorely.

"Poor girl!" he ended. "I wonder if even she is living and well."

At last Leo stirred, opened his eyes, then sat up. He was silent and apparently doubtful for a minute, and then he said:

"What makes it so light, Joe? There is no moon is there?"

"It is daylight," Joe replied. "Can't you tell that?"

"But you were to call me at midnight."

"Yes, I know."

"And you did not do it."

"No."

"Why didn't you?"

"Oh, I didn't think it worth while."

"Did you sleep, too?"

"No, not much."

"Then why didn't you call me? Why did you let me sleep all night while you remained awake?"

"Oh, that's all right."

"But it isn't. It's not fair."

"I wasn't very sleepy, and I'm satisfied."

"I'm not, though."

"If I am, you certainly ought to be."

"But I'm not."

"Oh, well, shut up. If I wanted to stay up all night whose business is it, I'd like to know?"

"It's mine when you stay up on my account."

"It's no such a thing."

"It is."

"Shut up."

"I won't do it.

"Then talk on."

"I will. Why didn't you call me?"

"I didn't have to."

"Joe, if I was big enough and strong enough I'd lick you."

"Perhaps."

"But as I am not, I'm going to do the next best thing and tell you what I think of you."

"Fire away if you want to."

"It won't be very complimentary."

"That don't matter. If it will make you feel better, say whatever you please. It won't hurt me none."

"Well, what I think of you is this: You are a blamed fool and the best-hearted and biggest-souled chap in the world."

"Is that all?"

"Yes. What do you say to it?"

"That your first qualification is evidently correct, but the others are away off."

"It is no such thing. It is just the other way about."

"Well, let it go. Did you rest well?"

"Never better."

"You heard no noise?"

"Not a thing. Why?"

"We had a visitor during the night."

"Who?"

"Can't you guess?"

"Not that man who captured us?"

"I think it was."

"He didn't come here?"

"Well, yes."

"You saw him and talked with him?"

"Oh, no, I'm happy to say I did not. If I had I guess I wouldn't be here now talking to you."

"I reckon that's true. But tell me about it."

Joe told all the particulars of his trying experience of the night. Leo listened in astonishment, and at the end exclaimed:

"And I lay there and slept through it all."

"Yes. I would have been glad if I could have been sleeping through it, too, about that time."

After a thoughtful pause Leo said:

"It was a mighty good thing you were awake instead of me, Joe, for I would certainly have made a mess of it in some way. I could never have carried it off as you did."

"I'm afraid I could never do it again."

"I don't know about that. I'm mighty glad you were able to do it this time, though."

"So am I."

"You bet. But say, what do you suppose became of the man?"

"I don't know."

"Do you reckon he's looking around here somewhere yet?"

"Can't say. More than likely he is."

"Then what are we going to do?"

"That's what I'd like for somebody to tell me."

"You think it won't be safe for us to try to reach the cabin?"

"There'll be a risk in it, of course."

"But we'd better chance it, eh?"

"If we could."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Just what I say."

"Can't we chance it?"

"Do you have any idea which direction to start from here?"

"No, but—say, it is cloudy, isn't it?"

"It certainly is."

Joe arose and peered cautiously all about him. It was quite light now and he could see very well for some distance in all directions.

"Is there any one in sight?" Leo asked.

"Not a soul," Joe replied.

"Then I guess he is gone."

"I hope so."

"And shall we go?"

"Where to?"

"Anywhere to get away from here."

"I don't know that we should better our condition any."

"I don't know. We will have to go soon, or starve. I'm as hungry as a wolf."

"So am I. But I can't see much prospect for food."

"If we could only reach the cabin!"

"Yes, if we only could."

"Well, we will have to try it."

"I am willing, but I don't see that we have much reason to hope to find it. I haven't the slightest idea which direction it is."

"Nor me."

"So if we start in search of it, we may go right away from it."

"Then what do you propose?"

"Nothing. There is nothing to propose."

"Well, we can't stay here and starve."

"No. If the sun would just come out, if

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only for a moment it would help us."

"There is mighty little prospect of that."

"I know it."

"Say, if we were to go back to the cliff we could get the direction."

"Yes, but there's one serious difficulty in that proposition."

"What is it?"

"We don't know the direction to take to reach the cliff."

"That's so. We are in a predicament, aren't we? A regular mess."

"We certainly are. We—hello, here!"

"What is it?"

"Lie down, quick!"

"What's the matter?"

"Peep around the corner of that rock."

Leo did as instructed. He took one peep around from behind a large rock which lay near them.

"He is coming back," he whispered.

"Yes, and he can't help seeing us this time. I guess it's all off now."

The continuation of this thrilling story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscription, for many great stories that you cannot afford to miss will appear during the coming months.

The Sea Kidnapers.

(Continued from page eleven.)

was the more ready to believe, but Daniel's story had elements of weakness.

"Why should Bigler want to kill me?" Richard asked.

"I don't know, sir."

"Has he ever said he had a grudge against me?"

"Not that I know of, sir."

"Has he acted in a hostile way—or looked at me venomously?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Suppose that he had stabbed me in the boat—don't you see that it would have been so open a crime that it would have been known to all?"

"I've thought of that, Mr. Volway, but if it's ag'in' what some calls logic, I can't help it. I just tell what I seen."

"I thank you heartily, and I'm not sure you are wrong. Is there anything more?"

"No, sir."

"Daniel, you were among those who went upstairs in El Casa Grande to seize the strange girl. Tell me what happened there."

Grief cast a glance over his shoulder. Although Richard was supposed to be his employer, he was plainly ill at ease over so long a talk with him. Yet, being questioned, he made reply.

"Why, it was all done in the dark, ye know. I didn't see much. That Spaniard, Don Tomaso, knew just where to go. He sidled into her room soft-footed an' grabbed her, an' then we skipped. But somebody see us, an' there was an alarm, as ye know."

"I believe Jeremy Reith was along?"

"Yes, sir."

"What was he doing?"

"Oh! just the same as the rest of us, I reckon."

"Then he did nothing odd?"

"Not that I seen. Wait a bit! Now I thing back, sir, I recollect that as we were slippin' away through the hall, that Jeremy struck a match. 'Let's set fire to the old rookery!' says he. Then he blowed the match out. 'That's foolish,' says he furder. An' he trotted along an' said nothin' more. Kinder venomous to want to fire the big house, wasn't he, sir?"

Richard did not reply. He was struck by the statement. If Reith intended what he mentioned, his idea was brutal, foolish and highly rash. Secret enterprises and risks against superior numbers are not helped by flaming lights, even if they are small.

"The skipper swore at Jeremy sorter soft," added Daniel, "but he wasn't one of the forecastle hands, ye know, an' couldn't say so much. But, sir, if you'll excuse me, I'd better not talk too much with you. Look out for Sam Bigler's knife!"

Daniel walked away, joining his shipmates and acting as innocent as usual. He left Richard with food for thought. It was nothing new that somebody in the ship meant him harm, and as he had gained something by having the identity of that enemy revealed, he was safer than before. He dismissed this subject with that mental comment.

While he was studying something else Jeremy Reith came on deck again. He noticed Richard and advanced to his side.

"What's doing now?" he asked, very carelessly.

"All quiet," replied Richard briefly.

"It isn't so below. Your latest charge is battering her door. An interesting person, Mr. Volway!"

"Why do you find her interesting?"

"I am in duty bound to look with attention on your friends."

"How about your own?"

"Oh!" answered Jeremy readily, "mine are so far away that I turn to yours. Miss Ziol tells me nobody can understand the language of your ward. Peculiar situation!"

"Have you tried your luck with her?"

"No. I am not a celebrated linguist. Since she came from such a grand mansion, I suppose she is an heiress. Am I right?"

"I have no inventory of her estate."

"You have her, which is more enticing. She's pretty, they tell me. But has a temper. Really, it is interesting!"

Jeremy dripped words with prodigality. His manner was outwardly polite, but there was a little stab in his every remark, and Richard understood his desire to be disagreeable under a sugar coating. His companion was trying to avoid a quarrel when their talk was interrupted by a shout from a lookout.

"Sail, ho!"

Captain Rockett was instantly alert.

"Where away?" he demanded.

"On the weather beam, sir."

The reply was unnecessary. Plainly visible to all, as if suddenly released from fog, a sail was bearing down on them. Caught almost between two fires, it became a vital question: Was the stranger friend or foe? Was she a peaceful merchantman, or another hostile man-o'-war?

This exceedinly interesting story will be continued in next week's Ledger, presenting the readers with some very dramatic happenings. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly urged to send in your subscription at once. Every family should take the Ledger, as humor and stories and pictures make life brighter and pleasanter for all, bringing health and entertainment and doing every one good. You will never miss the $1.00 for the subscription, while if you do not subscribe you will certainly miss the Ledger. Be wise and attend to this today.

PICKLED PEPPERS

Subdued.

"Why is the 'most ferocious wild man in captivity' so quiet today?" asked the visitor in the circus sideshow. "Are his keepers going to prod him with pitchforks?"

"Worse than that," whispered his manager. "His wife is coming to pay him a visit."

❦

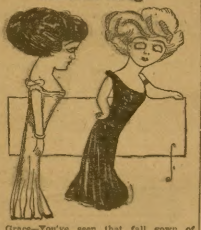
Weighted Down.

Rodrick—Both Bryan and Taft say they are laden down with issues.

Van Albert—Laden down? H'm! They must be "Bills of Laden."

❦

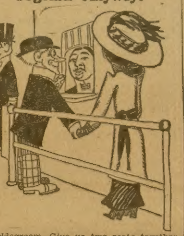
Just the Thing.



Grace—You've seen that fall gown of mine. Now I want to get a hat to match it. What would you suggest?

Helen—Why not get a slouch?

Together Anyway.



Bridegroom—Give us two seats together.

Theater Boxoffice Man—Nothing but standing room, sir.

Bridegroom—All right. Give us two standing rooms together.

❦

A Slip.

Miss Koyne—Are you sure, Mr. Afterdough, that it isn't my fortune of $100,000 instead of me that attracts you?

Mr. Afterdough (absently)—I am. I thought it was much bigger than that.

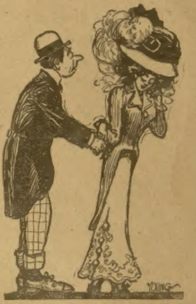
❦

A Helping Hand.

Cook—I understand Swiftly was held up last night.

Hook—Whoever did it doubtless did it as an act of charity, for when I left him he couldn't hold himself up.

A Light Retort.



"And if there is no moonlight will you meet me by gaslight, Georgina?"

"No, Adolphus; I'm no gas meter."

❦

Quite the Contrary.

Dicks—I hear you've been suffering all day with a sick headache?

Wicks—No, indeed.

Dicks—Haven't you had a headache, then?

Wicks—Yes, but it isn't sick. It's extremely vigorous.

❦

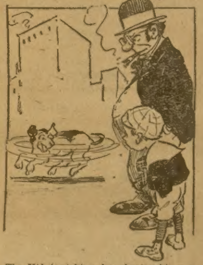
"We are going to entertain company tonight."

"Some people you like, I presume."

"Oh, mercy no! We would lose our social standing if we entertained people we like."

❦

Wise Kid.



The Kid (watching dog chasing his own tail)—Say, pop, wot kind of er dog is that?

His Father—Watch dog, my son.

The Kid—I guess he's winding himself up then.

Ask Your Neighbors

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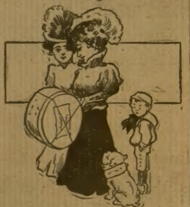
FOR YOUTHFUL EYES

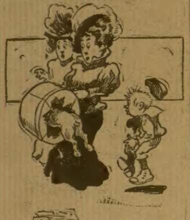
BROTHER TURKEY VISITS HIM.

Peter had scarcely closed his eyes
Before his hair began to rise,
For who should be perched on his bed
But Barnyard Turkey, fierce and red!
"Peter," he roared, "I saw today
You looked at me as if to say:
'Aha! You are so fat and fine—
On Thanksgiving I'll make you mine!'
Don't say you didn't, for I know
Your greedy nature makes you so."
"O, sir," cried Peter, "that must be
Some other lad that looks like me;
I am not greedy, sir, at all;
In fact my appetite is small."
"Fibber!" cried Barnyard Turkey, "What!
Shall I destroy you on the spot?
Did I not see you do your best
To eat my brother, legs and breast,
Till you were stuffed so full of him
It almost made my senses swim?
But now things are the other way,
There'll be no more Thanksgiving Day.
We gobblers have it in our view
To turn about and gobble you."
With that he puffed and puffed until
He grew as big as any hill—
So big the walls just burst apart,
And Peter woke up with a start,
With trembling voice he sighed: "O, dear!
Turkey is bad for me, I fear."

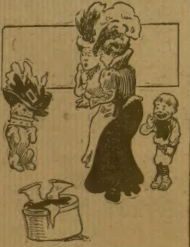
Showing Off.



The Lady—What an intelligent-looking dog!



Fido—Yes, I used to belong——



"To a circus. How's this?"

Horses of Iceland.

The horses of Iceland are shod with sheep's horns.

NED'S THANKSGIVING.

"I'm going to grandpa's," said little Willie May,
"To grandpa's in the country, to spend Thanksgiving day.
You haven't told me yet, Ned, where you're a-going to be,
But I'm certain sure you'll never have as good a time as me."

"Oh, I'm a-going to stay at home," then answered Neddie True;
"You needn't think I'd give it up to go along with you.
We've been to grandpa's and to all the aunts that's living near,
And I'm jolly glad it's our turn to have the folks this year."

"Well, Ned, that is a funny thing to hear a feller say.
If your grandma was as good as mine you wouldn't talk that way.
You should hear her say to grandpa when there's something extra nice,
'Now, pa, 'twon't hurt the boy a mite, cut him another slice.'

"There are apples in the cellar and walnuts stored away,
And sacks and sacks of popcorn in the loft among the hay,
And while the women say good-by grandpa comes round so quick,
And fills a feller's pockets as full as they can stick."

"Poh, Will I've got a grandpa that's jolly as can be,
You needn't think you've got a better one than me.
And you ought to see my grandma, you'd say she was a dear,
And they're going to eat Thanksgiving at our house this year.

"Pa's bought the biggest turkey he could find in all the town,
And ma's made pies and puddings and cakes both white and brown;
And I'm sure that pa was fooling when he said it was a dream
That I saw ma making candy-dates and lovely walnut cream.

"There's a box of splendid oranges, there's grapes and walnuts, too;
I'll tell you why this chap will have a better time than you:
They can't begin to eat things up and won't I be in clover
For days and days a-finishing the goodies that's left over."

—BELLE L. BARNES.

A Potato Race.

Played out of doors, by any number. A circle, about 40 feet in diameter, is marked out as a race course, and across it, at any point, is marked a straight line ten feet long; half outside the ring and half inside. On this line spots are marked at intervals of six inches.

Each contestant must take a potato from a basket placed just outside the ring and exactly opposite the line, and running around the circle place it on the first spot on the line. He continues on around the circle, and as he passes the basket he takes another potato, which he places on the second spot, and keeps on running round the circle till he has placed a potato on each spot. After placing the potato the runner must return to the inside of the ring without stepping over the line of potatoes, and each potato must be placed exactly on its proper spot.

Three judges are appointed, one of whom stands at the potato basket, one at the line and one in the middle of the circle to call out the runner's names in order and keep the time.

Any runner who takes more than one potato, or fails to take any; who skips a spot, or does not place his potato properly is declared out of the race.

The one placing the potatoes properly in the shortest time is the winner.

The course and line may be marked with flour or lime, on the earth or grass, and the spots for the potatoes may be of dark earth or short cross-lines.

Geography Has Its Terrors.

At examination time geography and physiology seem to inspire pupils with terror, and the unique answers given to simple question almost takes one's breath away, says the Washington Post. It is hard to conceive where such ideas as the following are gathered:

"Gibraltar is an island built on a rock.

"Cape Hatteras is a vast body of water surrounded by land and flowing into the Gulf of Mexico.

"In Austria the principal occupation is gathering austrich feathers.

"Mason and Dixon's line is the equator.

"Climate lasts all the time, and weather only a few days.

"We have an upper and lower skin. The lower skin moves all the time and the upper skin moves when we do.

"The stomach is a small pear-shaped bone situation in the body.

"The gastric juices keep the bones from creaking."

From these examples it is easy to see that for original ideas the American children cannot be beaten by those of any other nation in the world.

BOUND HOME FOR THANKSGIVING.

BY E. A. [illegible]

Oh, merry car wheels, whirl along the narrow, shining track,
For up and down o'er all the land ye carry thousands back
To homesteads, where the fathers wait and mothers smiling stand
In trembling joy, to greet their own and clasp them hand in hand.
Oh, wheels, speed on with rush and roar,
And bear the children home once more!

Oh, wheels, turn fast, for every mile ye compass brings more near
The blessed place, where dear ones wait, with warmth and lavish cheer.
To heal the homesick ones, who come from many sundered ways
To sit beside the household board, and blend glad songs of praise.
Be swift, wheels, and bear them straight
And safely where sweet welcomes wait.

A Japanese Story.

A farmer, just arrived in Heaven, began to explore.

"What are those strange-looking things over there on the shelf?" he asked. And as the Japanese are very fond of soup, he added, "Are they for soup?"

"No," was the reply, "those are ears. They belonged to people who heard what they ought to do in order to be good while on earth, but who did not do it. So, when they died, the ears were the only part of them which came to Heaven."

After walking a little farther, the farmer inquired:

"And what are those funny things? Are they for soup?"

"No," was again the reply, "they are tongues. They belonged to people who, while on earth, were continually telling other people what they should do in order to be good, but who never followed what they preached. So, when they died, the tongues alone came to Heaven."

Place of Importance.

Johnny was showing visitors about town.

"That," said he, "is one of the most 'portant spots in town."

"Why, I see nothing but a vacant lot," returned the visitor. "What is there in it to be proud of?"

"Yes, but 'tisn't always a vacant lot," retorted Johnny. Then he explained proudly: "That's where the circus always stops."

Harvey, aged 4 years, had an apple. His sister, aged 6, wanted a bite and he refused. She thought for a while and then said: "Oh, Harvey, let us play that I am a pig and you are feeding me." She got the apple.

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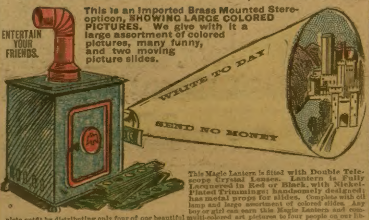

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